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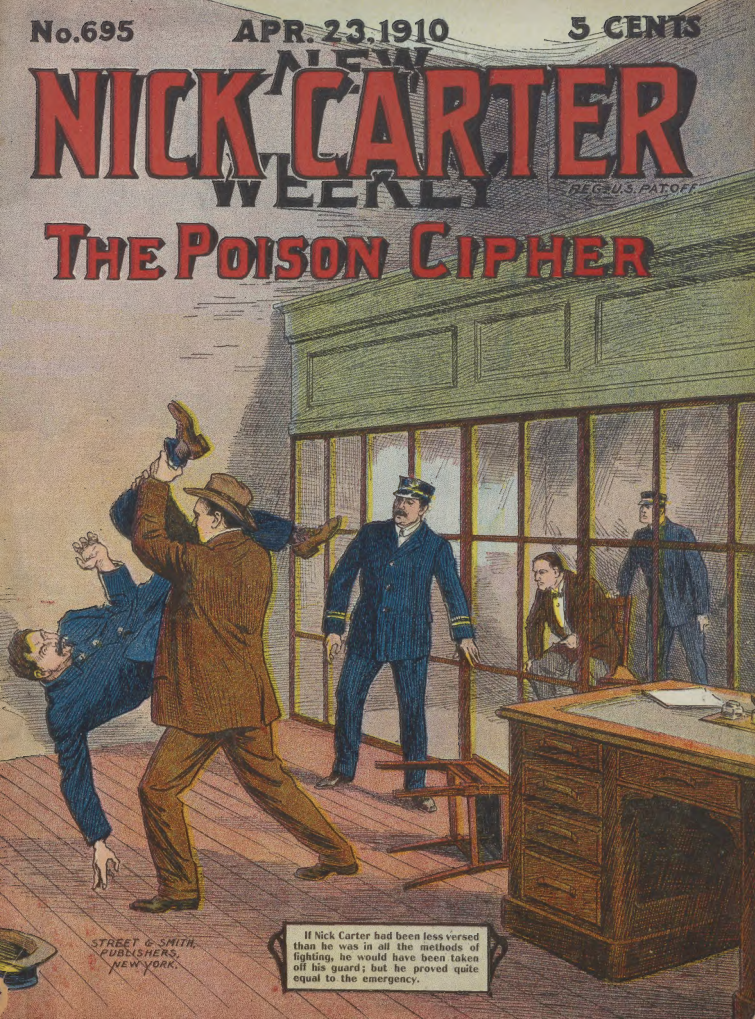
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

THE POISON CIPHER



If Nick Carter had been less versed than he was in all the methods of fighting, he would have been taken off his guard; but he proved quite equal to the emergency.

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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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The Prison Cipher;

OR,

Nick Carter and the Mysterious Substitute.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS SUBSTITUTION.

"It seems incredible that the man should have escaped again," said Nick Carter. "I was assured that he was hedged about this time by every safeguard, so that escape was impossible, and now you are sent to me——"

"It is true, sir, nevertheless," insisted the detective's caller. "But the mere fact of his escape is not the worst feature of it."

"No? What could be worse than to have that man at large again?"

"The very condition that exists is worse, sir; at least that is what I was told to say to you."

"Perhaps you had best tell me exactly what you were told to say to me. We might arrive at the purport of your errand sooner."

"I was told to tell you, sir, that Doctor Quartz made his escape from custody ten days ago. That would be——"

"Ten days ago! Why in the world haven't I been informed of it sooner, then?"

"If you will permit me to finish, Mr. Carter, I will give you all the information I possess."

"Go ahead, then."

"I was told to tell you that he made his escape ten days ago; that would be eleven days now, since it was yesterday when I was told to deliver the message. But you were not at home yesterday, and as I was told not to communicate the message to any person other than yourself, I was obliged to await your return."

"Well? What more is there?"

"You asked me, just now, why you were not informed of the escape sooner. I will reply to that question by stating that the officials at the prison did not know it themselves."

"Didn't know it themselves?"

"No, sir."

"Do you mean to tell me that an escape from the prison, which happened ten days ago, was not discovered until yesterday?"

"Yes, sir. That is the fact."

"But how could such a thing be possible?"

"It does seem impossible until one is told just how it happened."

"That is what I am waiting for you to tell me."

"It is a case of substitution, sir."

"Substitution?"

"Yes. Of one person for another."

"I am still in the dark."

"One person substituted for another one, sir. A man who is utterly unknown to us is now in custody in place of Doctor Quartz. A person who is not Doctor Quartz occupied the cell that was assigned to Doc-

tor Quartz. An innocent person, against whom no charge has been made, and who, so far as is known, has never been convicted of any crime, is now in prison in place of a man who was so charged and sentenced. That is the whole thing in a nutshell."

"Humph! I don't wonder that the warden didn't wish any other person to know about it."

"It is not that, sir. He is not seeking to save himself. It was his idea that it would please you to have the matter kept secret, and so he has sent me to you."

"Isn't it most time that you told me who you are?" asked the detective, with an ironical smile.

"I am an intimate and personal friend of Warden Hemstreet."

"You said that in the beginning. I would like to have something rather more definite, if you please," said Nick.

"Mr. Carter, my name is James Holloway. Hemstreet and I have been intimates since we were boys. We went to school together. Since his appointment as warden of the prison we have seen much less of each other than formerly, and, indeed, until I received the urgent message from him which asked me to go to him on this occasion, I had not seen him for two years or more."

"All of which information seems to be rather irrelevant, doesn't it?" queried the detective.

"Possibly; but you asked me to tell you who I am, and I am now endeavoring to comply with your request."

"Oh, well; go ahead in your own way."

"It is the only way in which I can fully explain my presence here, sir."

"Very well. Very well."

"I received the telegram from Hemstreet yesterday morning. It said, 'In trouble. Come to me at once.' Perhaps I ought to tell you that Jim Hemstreet and I have long been under promise to each other to respond instantly to such a request. It was originally a boyhood promise, but it has been kept during our manhood. I went to him at once."

"Well?"

"He received me in the parlor of his private quarters, and with an air of great mystery."

"There seems to have been occasion for that, at least."

"Our given names are the same. Said he, 'Jim, I'm up against it hard.' I am endeavoring to quote him exactly, Mr. Carter."

"Very well."

"'I'm up against it hard,' he repeated. 'Technically, I am breaking the law in calling you to me, and taking you into my confidence, when in reality I should have gone to the State authorities instantly as soon as I discovered what I am about to tell you.'

"'Our promise to each other does not include the breaking of the law,' I told him; but he laughed, and replied that I would understand the situation better after he had had an opportunity to explain it fully to me.

"He said: 'There has been an escape from the prison. An important prisoner—the most important one in my care, has taken French leave of us. The fact of the escape is, at present, known only to three persons. You are one of them, I am another, and one of my men—a keeper here—is the third.' Of course, Mr. Carter, he did not include the man who escaped, and the one who assisted him in the escape."

"I might have guessed that much without your assistance," said the detective dryly.

"Hemstreet continued: 'The worst of it is, the escape occurred ten days ago, and the fact of it did not come to my knowledge until to-day.' That was yesterday."

"I understand that much, at least."

"He said: 'I have sent for you to ask you to go to Nick Carter for me. I want you to deliver my message to him exactly as I give it to you, word for word, if you can do it.'

"I told him I would try, and he went on: 'I want you to tell the story of the escape, just as I shall presently tell it to you; but first I want you to ask him, as a favor to me, not to pass hasty judgment upon me for anything connected with the affair. Please ask him to wait until he has seen me and talked with me before he passes judgment. Nick Carter is a fair-minded man, and I think he will grant the request. I want him to keep the matter a secret from all the world until after he has seen and talked with me.'"

"It strikes me that Warden Hemstreet was taking a good deal for granted," said the detective.

"Yes, Mr. Carter. He said that same thing himself. 'Carter will not be inclined to do it at first,' is what he said; 'but after he has heard your story, and after you have pleaded with him, in my name, I think he will be inclined to help me out. It would cost me my position if this thing should get out now. I don't want it to get out. I want Nick Carter to help me to keep it from getting out; and I think he is the man to do it—when once he fully understands the situation. There you are, Mr. Carter. Now, what do you think of the showdown?'"

"It doesn't seem to me to have come to a showdown yet."

"That is because I haven't told you the story of the escape as the warden told it to me, sir."

"Precisely."

"I have referred to three men having knowledge of the escape; to the fact that I, an outsider, am one of them; that the warden in charge of the prison is another; and that a certain keeper, or guard, or turnkey, or whatever you choose to call him, is the third."

"Yes."

"That keeper's name is Sedgwick Mayne—rather a high-sounding name for a keeper, don't you think?"

"We need not discuss that just now."

"Late in the afternoon of the day before yester-

day—the day before Hemstreet sent for me to go to him—Mayne sought the warden and told him that he was afraid everything was not exactly right with one of the prisoners. When asked to which one he referred, Mayne gave the number of the man you call Doctor Quartz."

"Look here, Mr. Holloway," said the detective, somewhat shortly, "I quite appreciate your effort to do all in your power for your friend the warden, but you are altogether too long-winded in this recital. If you want me to go to see Hemstreet, as he desired, you'll have to drop all this circumlocution, and get down to facts. It doesn't matter to me what the keeper, whose name you object to, said to Hemstreet, nor what Hemstreet said to him. I don't care a rap about the fact that a prisoner which proved to be Quartz acted strangely, or what was done about his strange acts. What I want to know is, how the man escaped. I'll ask you about the particulars afterward in my own way."

"Very well, sir."

"You say there was a substitution. That means that another man was in the cell where Doctor Quartz should have been. Now, how did he get there, and how did the man who should have been there get away?"

"I will reply to one question at a time, sir. The first one, first."

"Yes."

"The stranger got there by being conducted thither by the guard or keeper. The real prisoner got away from there by being taken from the cell to the consultation room, presumably for consultation with his lawyer by that same keeper—by Sedgwick Mayne."

"Then the exchange was not made in the cell?"

"No. It must have been made in the counsel room. It could have been made in no other place."

"But what about the prison rule now in force, that when a prisoner is in consultation with his lawyer, or with any person, he must be constantly under the eyes of at least two of the regular prison guards, although they do not remain near enough to overhear what is said? How about that rule, Mr. Holloway?"

"The warden in telling me the story referred to that rule, Mr. Carter, and he assured me that it was not broken in this case. The prisoner was not out of sight of two of the guards at any moment during the time of that consultation—and yet the subsitution was made. That is the story I wished to tell you, sir."

CHAPTER II.

A REMARKABLE GET-AWAY.

"How does it happen that the substitution, if it were made at all, was not discovered until ten days after it happened?" asked the detective.

"That, Mr. Carter, is an equally strange part of the whole proceeding. The substitution was so cleverly done that the idea that a stranger had taken the place of the prisoner did not occur to any person connected with the prison."

"And the warden never suspected anything of the sort till Mayne went to him yesterday?"

"Not at all, sir. You must remember that the warden was not present when the consultation took place that afforded the opportunity for the change."

"Oh, I remember that perfectly well."

"The story as told to the warden by Mayne——"

"Tell me first how Mayne fixes the time of the substitution."

"He fixes it at ten days ago because that was the last time—the only time, in fact—when the prisoner was in consultation with a lawyer. When Doctor Quartz was put into that cell he announced that on a certain day a lawyer would call upon him for consultation, and he hoped that he would be permitted an uninterrupted conversation with the attorney for at least an hour. That was promised him."

"Well?"

"The day came. The attorney arrived. He presented himself in the usual form, and went through the ceremony that is insisted upon in such cases. He was taken to the consultation room, and the prisoner was taken to him there. It is at that point where the story of Mayne begins."

"Yes."

"Mayne was directed to produce the prisoner in the consultation room. Mayne summoned Jackson, another guard, and the latter appeared at the consultation room at the moment when Mayne took the prisoner there."

"That is, before the prisoner and the man who called upon him were alone together?"

"Before they actually saw each other, as a matter of fact."

"Well?"

"When the prisoner was admitted to the consultation room, Mayne and Jackson were both at hand. They entered the room with the prisoner. The lawyer was already there."

"Yes. And then——"

"Mayne says that he did not notice at the time the fact that the prisoner and the lawyer who called upon him were dressed somewhat alike, or that they were similar in appearance. But he did recall the fact when he told the story to the warden.

"Stop right there long enough to tell me in what manner they were alike, both as to costume and physiognomy."

"Mayne remembers now that they wore clothes of the same pattern and cut; at least in a general way."

"Yes."

"Both were large, thick-set men, rather inclined to fatness. Both were smooth-shaven. The lawyer wore a slouch hat of black, pulled well down upon his head, and he did not remove it while he was in the room; at least, Mayne did not see him do so."

"That was evidently a part of the arrangement provided for the act of substitution."

"Doubtless. The lawyer also wore heavily bowed, gold-framed spectacles; and his black coat, Prince Albert in cut, was tightly buttoned around him. The dress was correctly professional in every way, as Mayne now describes it."

"Go on."

"On the other hand, the prisoner wore no hat, of course, and no spectacles. His coat was not buttoned, and it hung loosely upon him. His waistcoat was low-cut, and showed a wide expanse of shirt front, in the very centre of which was a diamond stud, which, for some reason, he had been permitted to retain and wear."

"And that, I suppose, is as far as Mayne's memory serves him."

"Yes."

"Now, where did the men stand while they were in consultation relative to the positions occupied by the two guards?"

"Mr. Carter, have you seen the arrangement of the new consultation room since the prison was remodeled?"

"No; I have not."

"The warden took me to it in order that I might see for myself."

"Well?"

"The consultation room, as a whole, is twelve by eighteen feet in its dimensions. Six feet have been taken from the larger dimension and partitioned off from the other by glass; and thus two rooms are created."

"I understand," said the detective, nodding his head.

"That arrangement leaves the consultation room proper exactly twelve by twelve; and the smaller room, wherein the guards keep watch of the prisoner while he consults with his attorney, is twelve by six."

"Yes."

"There is a door in the glass partition. The frame of the door is of metal, and is not more than two inches in width at any place. Where the sheets of glass come together they are held in place by metal strips half an inch in width."

"I see."

"So the condition is created that while not a word of the conversation that passes between the prisoner and his counsel can be heard by either of the guards, not a movement made by either of them passes unobserved by the watchers. The men in consultation are in full view all the time."

"That is, they are supposed to be so."

"They are so—unless the guards are careless and do not watch them."

"Exactly, and that seems to be the trouble in the present case. But, go on."

"Mayne swears that he did not take his eyes from the two men while they talked together."

"Of course he swears that; but he must have done so, nevertheless, else this would not and could not have happened. But tell me what did happen?"

"That is the strange part of it. Mayne takes his oath that when the prisoner and the lawyer began their consultation they at first seated themselves on two of the chairs that the room contains. They sat there for a time, then arose, and Mayne thought the consultation was at an end. But the two men began to walk up and down the room together."

"They walked side by side, I suppose?"

"Naturally, but also arm in arm, talking earnestly all the time, and with their heads very close together, as if they were absorbed in what they were saying."

"As doubtless they were. Well?"

"They walked up and down the room——"

"Wait a moment. They had twelve feet in which to pass and repass the length of the room."

"Yes."

"In walking the length of the room did they do so at right angles with the men who were watching them, or did they walk away from those two and then return?"

"They walked directly away from them and then returned."

"Good. I am beginning to see through that ruse. Now, I wonder if Mayne was particular in his description of the incident in regard to another thing."

"What is that?"

"Did he happen to remember how the men who were walking made the turns?"

"Yes. I asked him that."

"I am rather surprised that it should have occurred to you to ask that. But——"

"I think I had the same idea that strikes you now, sir."

"Possibly. How did they turn about at each end of the room?"

"Sometimes they turned together, one walking around the other, and returned as they had crossed the room, relatively in the same positions. At other times each man turned separately, so that they changed positions with each other, from left to right. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"If I take your left arm and cross the room with you, and we turn together at the opposite end of the room, I will remain at your left hand; but if we turn separately, and again link arms, I will have your right arm in returning."

"I understand the thing perfectly now, Mr. Holloway. I can see exactly how the substitution was made. It was easily done, after all, with two half-stupid men on the watch."

"Perhaps you will tell me. I confess that I have not seen through the actual change, although the rest of it appeared to have been simple enough."

"Well," said Nick, "in preparing for the substitu-

tion, it was necessary to take chances in regard to the keenness or the stupidity of the guards. As a rule, while not exactly stupid, they are not up to a trick like that one was for the simple reason that it was the very last thing that either of them would have looked for to happen."

"I agree with you there; or anybody else, for that matter."

"Granted; only a prison keeper should be on his guard against all things."

"Certainly."

"Of course, I have the advantage of knowing that prisoner thoroughly. He has the gift of foreseeing conditions; or if he does not exactly foresee them, he prepares for emergencies which may happen. That lawyer—if he was a lawyer, and the probability is that he is one—was engaged long ago to perform this service; was engaged, in fact, long before the crime was committed for which Quartz was imprisoned."

"I don't think I follow you there."

"Suppose I am Quartz, and you are the lawyer?"

"Yes."

"I select you to act for me in this particular affair, if it ever happens, principally because we do not look unlike each other. This is not so in the present instance, but we will suppose it to be true."

"Yes."

"I say to you: 'I am about to give you a retainer of a thousand dollars. For that retainer you are to perform certain services for me, precisely as I shall direct, in case the emergency shall arise at any time or place.'"

"Well?"

"I say to you: 'Upon the receipt of a certain message, which I shall outline to you before we part, you are to come to me, no matter where I am, even if it is at the other side of the world. I will be in prison somewhere. You are to present yourself to me, representing yourself to be my lawyer, exactly so many days after my arrest; and you are to come to me at a stated hour of that day.' Do you understand that much?"

"Perfectly."

"I direct you how you are to be dressed in every particular; how your coat shall be cut, what the materials of your clothing shall be; that you shall wear such a style hat, and must wear it, too, all the time. You must wear the spectacles which I provide; also the diamond stud. In short, I arrange for every detail of your dress to be used on that occasion."

"I understand."

"Then, before I part with you, I practice walking up and down the room with you, and making the turns as you have described them."

"I see. I see."

"Do you, indeed. Possibly not all of it—yet," said Nick.

CHAPTER III.

THE INSIDE OF THE PLOT

"I am not quite through, yet," the detective continued.

"I am very deeply interested, Mr. Carter."

"Perhaps. I describe this to you, not as a fact, but as a guess, made because I know the man who escaped from prison. I have studied Doctor Quartz for years. He is the most proficient in his line of any man who ever lived. Now, to continue."

"Yes, sir."

"We walk up and down the room together practicing. We count time like students of feats in tumbling. We count time in making the turns at each end of the room. We turn about just so, according to rule. You wear your hat and the spectacles."

"Yes."

"At the making of one of the turns, you unbutton your coat, remove your spectacles. You pass the spectacles to me while I button my coat. At the turn you remove your hat and drop it to the floor. We stood together to recover it—just as the turn is to be made."

"And in recovering the fallen hat——"

"In recovering the fallen hat, and in making the turn, you rise from the stooping posture, hatless, and with your coat open, and with your spectacles gone. I rise from my stooping posture, wearing the hat and spectacles, and with my coat buttoned tightly. You show the diamond stud; the one I wear is covered. We have changed positions, although we have not seemed to do so. The substitution has been affected."

"And there is nothing more to do, save for you to walk out of the prison as the lawyer, while I take your place."

"Yes; there is more to do yet."

"What?"

"We must still continue to walk up and down that room for a time. There may be some slight difference in our build, in our looks, notwithstanding the glasses. It is necessary that we should accustom the men who are on watch to the change that has been made. If they saw anything that suggested suspicion during the time of the actual change, they must see enough of us in the new arrangement to overcome that slight suspicion. So we continue to walk up and down for a considerable time yet."

"I understand you now, thoroughly."

"As soon as I am satisfied that no suspicion of the change that has taken place exists in the minds of those who are watching, I signal that the consultation is finished. Then I am shown out of the prison as the lawyer, and you are returned to the cell as the prisoner."

"And after that——? Why is not the fraud discovered at once?"

"There are several reasons. One is because I have used exceeding care in selecting you to act for me;

another is that we have rehearsed every act which you are to commit after I have left you there. You know what to say, and how and when to say it. Perhaps you have a toothache, and call for drops, and a bandage, to allay the pain. You have agreed with me that you will remain there and play your part a certain number of days, if you are not discovered before that time. You will have to undergo a term of imprisonment for what you have done, but you are to be well paid for that; and, anyhow, that is in the previous arrangement between us. The thing is done. I have escaped. The important part of the affair is accomplished. The remainder is only trivial."

The detective's caller was thoughtful, and presently Nick continued:

"We have wasted considerable time over this discussion, perhaps, and yet I have thought it best to go into it. Now, I will go with you to see the warden."

"You consent to help him out of his trouble?"

"Certainly I will help him. I may need his help some time."

"Then, sir, I will confess to you that he is here."

"Here? Where?"

"He is waiting outside in a carriage."

"So he was afraid to come in and tackle the subject himself, was he?"

"Not exactly afraid, Mr. Carter; but he believed that if he sent a courier ahead of him you might listen to the story with more patience than if he appeared himself in the first place."

"Well, go to the door and call him. You are a good pleader. I suppose the warden has a plan, hasn't he?"

"I believe he has. It is his great fear that you will not see it as he does."

"Possibly I will not; but at all events, I will hear what it is."

"At least that is something."

Two minutes later Warden Hemstreet was introduced into the room, and he stepped forward and shook hands with the detective. It was not the first time these two had met, although the warden was rather new in his position. Nick had known his predecessor better.

"Well, warden," said the detective, "you are rather up against it, aren't you?"

"I should say I am, Mr. Carter. Has Jim succeeded in inducing you to help me out?"

"I don't know as to that. It depends upon what plan you have to suggest. Quartz has escaped, and you want him back again, of course. That is rather a large contract."

"Don't you think you can get him, Carter?"

"I don't know. I have got him, as you express it, three times within the last six months, but he doesn't stay got. The chances are that this time he will make himself scarce around this part of the country. I don't much think that he will care to run the risk of being taken again."

"He must be taken again."

"Oh, well, that is easily said; but it's mighty difficult to accomplish. However, let's hear your plan."

"Has Jim told you that we are the only persons who know of the escape?"

"Yes. But what about that other guard—Jackson?"

"He hasn't an idea about it, and never has had one."

"Well, what is your plan?"

"I want to keep the thing a secret. Mayne won't tell, for his position is in danger. I've got him fixed all right."

"Go on, then."

"That is as far as I can go, Carter. I want you to do the planning for me now."

"Oh; so that is the idea, eh?"

"Yes. I have got a prisoner who is supposed to be Quartz. I want to keep him there as Quartz; and while I am keeping him, I'm in hopes that you will find Quartz and return him to me."

"How about the present prisoner? He is aware of the substitution as thoroughly as we."

"I'll attend to him all right. He won't do any talking; you can rest assured of that much."

"Hasn't he done any already?"

"He has tried to—since yesterday; but I've got him now where there won't be anybody to listen to him if he does talk."

"Who is guarding him?"

"Mayne."

"I see."

"The only thing that I can see which may interfere with my plans about keeping him till the genuine Quartz is recaptured, is that some legal move may be made in the case of Quartz, which will necessitate producing him in court. In that case we will have to take the district attorney into our confidence."

The detective's eyes sparkled, and he smiled.

"I shouldn't wonder if that very thing would happen—after a while," he said. "It would be just like Quartz to do that."

"To do what? What do you mean?"

"Well, it is likely that Quartz arranged with his substitute that only a certain number of days were to elapse before the present prisoner should make his identity known; before he would confess that he is not Quartz, and that Quartz has escaped."

"Well?"

"Why, under ordinary circumstances, the moment the fact became known, there would be a hue and cry for Quartz; the papers would have printed columns about his fourth escape.* Much would be written and said about the affair."

"Certainly."

"But as it is, when the allotted time elapses, and nothing is said or done, Quartz will be the first man

*See three preceding issues of NICK CARTER WEEKLY, Nos. 692, 693, 694.

to guess the reason for the inactivity. He will know that instead of giving out the information, and starting a thousand men, more or less, on the trail of Quartz, the man who is warden of the prison has gone straight to—well, to me; for that is what Quartz will guess about it."

"And he will think that it is upon your advice that we are keeping quiet?"

"He will regard it as the consensus of opinion among those who know the facts; and what I said would be just like Quartz in the matter, was intended to be this: He will induce some person to get out a writ of habeas corpus in the case of the supposed Quartz, alleging that the prisoner is not Quartz."

"Would he dare do that?"

"Dare? He dares anything. And, don't you see, he would owe it to his substitute to do all that can be done to free him now. Otherwise, if the thing should go along indefinitely that stranger might be electrocuted in the place of Quartz. The law would never permit that."

"By Jove! rather than have it known, I'd see the man go to the chair in place of——"

"No, you wouldn't. I know that you feel bloodthirsty just now; but all the same you would draw the line at seeing one man executed for the crime of another."

"Perhaps. I don't know. But if Quartz attempted such a thing as you say, he would have to appear in it somewhere, wouldn't he?"

"I don't know about that. Not necessarily, I think. He could get some one else to start the ball rolling. He would probably begin the thing by using the newspapers."

"How?"

"Well, put yourself in his place. If you had that to do, don't you think you could find a newspaper writer who would just jump at the chance of starting a sensation of that sort."

"But he would first have to convince the newspaper man that Quartz had actually escaped; and as long as we keep that other fellow away from——"

"My dear warden, don't you see, or won't you? Which?"

"I don't see—what you are getting at."

"There are fifty or more newspaper men who have seen Quartz; who know him fairly well by sight. There are a hundred or more who saw him repeatedly at the time he was lying unconscious at the hospital, when the famous case of Quartz was attracting world-wide attention. There are any quantity of those fellows."

"Well, what of it?"

"Suppose Quartz got one of them off into a corner—and by that I mean into a house or a room where Quartz would have no fear of interruption. Do you think he would find it difficult to convince that particular newspaper man that he was Doctor John D. Quartz? If you knew the man as well as I do, you would not think so."

"I guess you are right about that."

"Of course I am right. And, say, wouldn't a man with the news instinct see a big beat in that information? Would he lose any time in getting the ear of his managing editor? I guess not. And wouldn't the editor play it up for all it was worth the minute he was convinced? Well, I think so—and then some!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAN WHO IS A SHADOW.

Nick Carter was seated in the consultation room at the prison.

It was the morning of the day following his talk with Holloway and the warden, and he had decided that before he undertook the case in detail, he would have a heart-to-heart talk with the substitute.

The man was seated facing the detective now; and, in accordance with the rule of the prison, there were two men beyond the glass partition watching them. Those two were Mayne and Jackson.

Nick had intently studied the man before him the moment he was brought into that room, and he was not so greatly amazed as he had half suspected he would be by any likeness between this substitute and the prisoner whom he had been so instrumental in releasing.

The two men were alike, to be sure; and yet not so greatly alike as to have rendered it an easy matter for one to pass himself off as the other one.

The detective began the conversation in a characteristic manner.

"How did you do it?" he demanded abruptly, as soon as the prisoner was before him.

"Do what?" was the reply. "Are you one of the bunch that insists that I am Doctor Quartz, the prisoner, whose place I took here?"

"Oh, now; I'm a bunch by myself. I know that you are not Quartz."

"Then, perhaps, you will help me to convince this stupid lot here of that fact."

"I don't know about that. It may be considered better to go on accepting you as Quartz—and I am the one man who can convince others that you *are* Doctor Quartz, if I care to try to do so."

"Why should you care to do that?"

"Somebody must go to the chair for the crimes that Quartz has committed. We had him here. You chose to step in and free him. You see——"

"Do you mean to tell me that you would take an oath that would send an innocent man to the death chair?" demanded the prisoner.

"The warden of the prison has been carefully considering the advisability of doing that very thing. And, after all, under the law I am not sure that you

are not now guilty as an accessory. Under the law of the State of New York, accessories before and after the fact of a murder, are counted as guilty as the principal. But you haven't told me yet. How did you do it?"

"How did I do what?"

"How did you work the substitution so cleverly, and keep yourself unrecognized for what you were not, for so long a time? I confess that now that I have seen you it puzzles me."

"I obeyed instructions; that is all."

"And you received a good round sum for it, didn't you?"

"That is none of your business, as I take it."

"True; it is none of my business."

"Don't you think I look like Quartz?"

"After a fashion—yes. But you would never have deceived a person who took the trouble to look closely at you."

"Perhaps not; and then, again, perhaps yes. I was made up very carefully. The great difficulty was that I could not properly wash my face for ten days. To one who is naturally of cleanly habits that is a trial."

"I can imagine it so. Who made you up?"

"I did it myself. Of course I had had lessons from the principal in the matter. We spent considerable time studying it; and in studying the part I was to play. Really, I think if you had seen me before I gave my face a thorough washing, you might have been deceived yourself."

"Do you. I wonder if you realized what you would be up against when you undertook this affair?"

"I begin to fear that I did not."

"You haven't a longing to go to the death chair, have you?"

"Not distinctly a longing; no," smiled the prisoner. He seemed very cool and thoroughly master of himself.

"Do you realize that you are in a fair way to do so?"

"You couldn't make me believe that in a thousand years."

"Couldn't I? Why not?"

"Well, I have the promise of Quartz that he would return and give himself up rather than that should happen, or seriously threaten to do so."

"You believed him, of course."

"When he made that promise—yes. I still believe."

"What did you expect, then?"

"A short term in prison at the most."

"A short term! You'll get twenty years, if you don't get a life sentence."

"Oh, no I won't. Quartz will see to it that I do not. If—but I think I have said enough."

"You might as well have continued. I know what you started to say as well as if you had uttered it word for word."

"Well, in that case there was no need to say it."

"You were about to tell me that Quartz went so far as to make you the promise that if things went too badly, and there was danger of your getting a long sentence, he would find a way to get you out of prison, even as you and he together got him out of it."

"Really, sir, you are a mind reader. I had no idea that you could guess so closely. You haven't told me who you are—but I could guess your name from certain things that Doctor Quartz has told me. You are Nick Carter, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Doctor Quartz' old enemy. He told me about you. He said that you would be the first one to interview me after the truth was known; or that you would be among the first."

"I suppose he schooled you in what you were to say to me, too, didn't he?"

"Certainly. I don't think you could ask a question for which the reply has not been anticipated between us."

"That is interesting. I will, nevertheless, ask you a few."

"As you please. I am here to answer or not, as I choose."

"I suppose you have a name that you call your own, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes. That is to say, I had one once; but it is so long a time since I have made use of it that it is practically forgotten."

"Well, what is the name you have selected to give to me, now, when I ask you for one?"

"Shadow is a good name. It isn't mine, of course. It is one that Quartz gave to me. He has a facetious way of calling me his shadow, you know."

"Why?"

"I suppose because I have acted in that capacity for him—as a sort of shadow."

"How long a time have you been on terms of more or less intimacy with the doctor?"

"Mr. Carter, I cannot tell why you care to ask me questions knowing, as you must do, that I will lie to you whenever it serves my purpose better to do so. I have served him since I began to act in that capacity."

"You are an Englishman, aren't you?"

"I am a man without a country. I owe allegiance to nobody, and to no country."

"This is not your first experience in a prison, is it?"

"I have had many experiences; some of them pleasant ones, some otherwise."

"Are you in reality a lawyer?"

"I am a man of many professions. I have practiced nearly all of them in my time."

"So I supposed. I have an idea, however, that this is your first experience in an American prison. There is something about your assurance that tells me that. I don't suppose you have been told that we have a system of persuasion here that is quite efficacious, have you? Or are you informed as to that?"

"I couldn't say. Possibly you will enlighten me," was the cool reply.

"No. I will leave it to others to do that. But, Mr. Shadow, since that is the name you elect to wear for the present, there are two things about you in which I am interested, and concerning which I shall take some pains to instruct myself at once."

"Indeed?"

"One is your past history. The other—you need not know what it is just now. But, for the present, I think I shall devote my time to looking you up, rather than to pass it in an utterly useless search for Doctor Quartz. You interest me, Mr. Shadow."

"Thank you. I am honored," was the satirical response.

The detective returned to the office of the warden.

It is true that he had not accomplished much by his talk with the prisoner; but, nevertheless, there were as great results from it as he had expected.

Nick Carter knew Quartz thoroughly well. He knew that the wily doctor would not select anybody to aid him in his schemes whom he could not trust, and who was not gifted by nature with more or less of the intellectual attributes which would make such a person not easy to draw information from.

"Warden," said the detective, when the two were seated together, "it is as I expected. You would say, as you doubtless have said already, that there is no information to be obtained from this prisoner who has taken the place of Quartz; and yet I have managed to extract a goodly amount of knowledge from him for all that."

"You have? I couldn't get a thing from him."

"Nor have I got a thing from him, according to his own view. But his manner and his language; his air and his demeanor, told me considerable."

"What, for example?"

"He is an Englishman, for one thing. He is a professional man, for another. Those two things are inevitably stamped upon him."

"Perhaps they are—but I did not see them. He doesn't talk like an Englishman; at least not like the Englishmen I have known."

"He does not talk broadly, if that is what you mean; but he uses certain expressions that are undoubtedly English. He has mannerisms that are English, also. And he has the stamp of a professional man. In fact, I should say that he is *two* professional men in one."

"Eh? Two?"

"Yes. He has either been a solicitor or a barrister, for one; and I am of the opinion that he has at least studied medicine, if he has not practiced it. That is what I mean by two professions."

"I see."

"At first I thought he was a crook; a professional criminal as well; but I changed my mind as to that. He has the criminal instinct; the lack of conscientious scruple; the absence of moral principle—all that. But I don't think he has been much, if any, in the public eye as a criminal. And for that very reason he will be all the easier to trace."

"To trace! Are you going to trace him out?"

"Assuredly. It is important, and I think it will prove to be the quickest way to get on the track of Quartz. I am convinced that those two men have been rather intimate in the past; but how intimate, or in what way, remains to be determined. But—one thing is certain."

"What is that, Carter?"

"The two men have a method of communicating with each other now."

"Now? While this fellow is here in prison?" exclaimed the warden.

"Yes."

"But that is impossible!"

"No. On the contrary, it is a fact. At least, I believe it to be a fact," replied the detective.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRISONER'S CIPHER.

The warden left his chair and crossed to the window. He stood there for a moment, then returned to his chair opposite the detective.

"What you say is simply absurd," he remarked quietly. "If there is one thing upon which I have prided myself since I took charge of this prison, it is the fact that I have thoroughly put to a stop all methods of communication between the prisoners and their friends outside. The practice does not exist in this prison now."

"Well, I won't argue the thing with you. But—how does this prisoner amuse himself when he has leisure? Does he read?"

"Yes. He seems to read a great deal; and he is mighty particular in his choice of books. I should take it that most of his reading is in the form of study."

"And what does he study?"

"The last book he sent for was—well, an odd one. I confess I had never heard of it before; but then I have never been an admirer of Darwin."

"He brings things a bit too near home to suit you, I suppose. What was the book?"

"'Expressions of Emotions in Man and Animals,' by Darwin. He was very particular about securing an edition he wanted, too."

"Hasn't he been particular about editions in the case of every book he has expressed a wish to have?" asked the detective.

"Yes."

"When Quartz was here himself, did he also send for books, and did you let him have what he wanted?"

"Yes. I saw no reason not to do so. In fact, I am in favor of permitting the prisoners to have prac-

tically all the books they can use intelligently, provided their selection is of a proper sort."

"Exactly. Now, Quartz must have left a few books here when he went away so suddenly, did he not?"

"Three or four; most of them were on medical subjects."

"Certainly. That would be only natural. Warden, did you ever hear of the 'retroverted cipher'?"

"Can't say that I ever did. It sounds like—well, like a medical term, or like one that medical men would make use of."

"It is."

"Tell me about it."

"A certain Paris physician was confined in the Bastile during the days before the revolution. He had been anticipating arrest and imprisonment for a long time, and when it came he was prepared. He managed during the months that he was locked away from the world, and kept in solitary confinement, not only to send, but to receive messages that were, in effect, as comprehensive as written letters. He did it by a very clever scheme which he had invented during the time when he was expecting arrest at any moment. He named it the 'retroverted cipher.'"

"And you think that the prisoner and Quartz are making use of that same cipher?"

"That is my opinion."

"But it is absolutely impossible for them to send messages in and out of this prison."

"It is unnecessary that they should do so; at least to that extent which you would call sending a message. But such as they are, they are sent in and out of the prison without the least trouble and without exciting the smallest suspicion."

"Tell me how it is done."

"It is necessary, in order to accomplish it perfectly, to anticipate much of what will be desirable to say in the future. That done, I select a book. Any book will do; the only important requisite about it is that it shall be easy of acquirement. I mean by that, that a first-class bookseller would keep it on sale. Now, when this prisoner sends for books, does he not direct that each book shall be procured at a certain place?"

"Yes. He has always done that; but it is not always the same place."

"No. That is unnecessary."

The detective reached out and possessed himself of a book that was on the table near him.

"Here I have a copy of 'The Count of Monte Cristo,'" he said. "Now this——"

"By the way, Carter, that very book happens to be one that Quartz left in his cell. We removed everything that he left behind him as soon as we discovered about the substitution."

"All the better. I won't open the book just yet; but when I do, I will doubtless have something to show to you. If I do not, my theory will be all at fault."

"Well, go on. I'm curious to hear about that cipher."

"We will say that I am anticipating arrest; that you are my best friend; that there are important reasons why we think it will be desirable that we should have a means of communication after my arrest. So I procure this book."

"Well?"

"We seat ourselves together with it in hand. We con its pages carefully, having in mind things that we are likely to wish to say to each other in the future, when I am imprisoned. You search your copy carefully; I search mine as carefully. Whenever one of us discovers a sentence which seems apropos to the occasion, the attention of the other is called to it. It is read aloud between us, commented upon, and every turn and twist of its meaning is pondered."

"But what good will that do?"

"Wait. In some manner that passage, paragraph, or sentence, is marked. The inventor had an original method of making the markings. He had been permitted to retain his silver toothpick, and with that instrument he simply made dented lines along the side or the top of the page he wished to mark. Now—I don't wish to open this book just yet; give me another one that has not been inside the prison. Thank you—I open this book. My eyes light upon the following paragraph:

"'I have been anxious, fearing that you might desert me; and yet I believe you will be true. We have a common enemy whom we must fight together, if we would win. He has been here to-day. I have seen him, and instead of wreaking his animosity upon you, as one would suppose he would do, he threatens me.' By Jove, warden, that paragraph would fit exactly into what has just happened in my interview with Shadow. However, that is not what I am getting at."

"What is?"

"That paragraph would seem like one that we might want. I would mark it, say, with a toothpick—thus." Nick drew a mark at the top of the page.

"Well?"

"I don't have to mark the paragraph itself; only the page; and I make one mark only upon it. One is an odd number."

"I haven't caught on yet."

"We search on through the book, finding other paragraphs which fit with that one; others which may, or may not, be a continuation of that same subject; and on every page where I discover a sentence or a paragraph which fits, I make an odd mark.

"Then we begin again at the beginning of the book. We search for other expressions which are directly the opposite in meaning to those already selected. We mark those pages with an even number of marks, beginning with two.

"Every paragraph that is referred to by the marks, is carefully written down by each of us, and learned by heart, as the schoolboy says."

"That would be something of a stunt, wouldn't it?"

"With life imprisonment staring you in the face—no."

"Go on."

"We select a dozen such books; twenty; as many as we can find the time to master. They contain all sorts of messages, covering every bit of ground that we may find available for use in the future. Then the day comes. I am arrested and sent to prison."

"Now you are getting to it."

"Yes."

"You are sent to prison, and something turns up which makes it important that you should communicate with me. How do you do it?"

"I ask the officials of the prison where I am confined if I may have a certain book. I very much desire that it be purchased at one of several places—and I name three or four dealers—because I know those places to keep the edition I prefer."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"Well, it is according to the place where the book is purchased that is your key. If I send to Brown's, or White's, or Robinson's for it, that means that the message is under the odd numbers. If I send to Gray's, or Jackson's, it means that the message is under the even numbers."

"But the book you send for isn't marked."

"No. I really do not want the book at all. I merely want you to know that I sent for it. You have the marked book already in your possession; or you remember the marked passages, which is quite as well. Being outside the prison, and expecting such messages, you have already arranged so that you will be informed, somehow, of my desire for such a book. Either you will have made arrangements with a clerk at each of the booksellers' places, or you will have subsidized some one at the prison to tell you when and what books I want, and where I—where they were procured."

"Humph! It is rather far-fetched; but I suppose it would work at a pinch."

"Extremity, warden, makes all things easy of accomplishment. Think of what has been done by prisoners in making their escapes. Think of the ingenuity that has been used by hundreds of them in the past. This is a very simple thing as compared to many things that have happened."

"I suppose so. But, admitting that I receive your message all right, and get out of the mass of stuff that has been marked just what you want to say to me, how do I reply to you?"

"That is much the more simple method of the two."

"I don't see it."

"All prisoners are permitted to receive messages from the outside, even though they are not allowed to send them."

"Yes."

"Provided the letters are opened and read in the prison office, they are usually permitted to go to the prisoner without further trouble—unless there is something decidedly outside the rules contained in them. And even if a letter is not given to a prisoner, it will be read to him."

"That is true."

"And you, under these conditions, have taken pains that you, or some one of your selection, shall be permitted to communicate with me. You send me a letter. It contains not a word or an expression that could cause the slightest adverse comment. In it you remark casually that you have been killing time by reading such and such a book; or, in any way whatever, you ring in the mention of the title. There is your key. You know the rest by heart."

"But how do you know whether my message to you is under the odd or the even marks?"

"The date of the letter tells that. If you happen to write the letter on the tenth, and you want an odd date, it is easy enough to date the letter one day ahead or behind. Do you see through it now?"

"Yes."

"Good. Now, I'll take a look at 'Monte Cristo'; and after that there is something that I am anxious to have you do for me in regard to your substitute prisoner."

CHAPTER VI.

DIGGING FOR A CLUE.

The detective opened the pages of "Monte Cristo," and began turning the leaves as one does it, idly, without apparent motive.

The warden, watching him, saw him smile at a page here and there, and soon became convinced that Nick had discovered something which was tending to uphold his theory. After a little, the detective said to him:

"There is better luck here than I thought. When I mentioned the retroverted cipher, I was not at all sure that Doctor Quartz had attempted to make use of it; and yet I was convinced that he had established a method of communication with his substitute. But here it is as plain as day."

"Do you mean that Quartz and this fellow who has taken his place actually have made use of that old cipher you have been explaining to me?" asked the warden.

"Just that. Here it is. Here in this book."

"Show me."

Nick passed the copy of the book to the official.

"If you will take the trouble to turn the pages," he said, "you will discover that many of the pages bear marks such as I have described; but in this case the person who made the marks, whether it was the doctor, or the man who calls himself Shadow, has used his thumb nail as a medium."

"I see," replied the warden, turning the leaves. "He has merely pressed hard upon the pages with his thumb nail, making an indenture. But the highest number of marks I discover here is ten."

"Surely. He would not care to make too many marks on a single page, and so he goes only as high as ten; at that point a new beginning is made. The second one, counts for eleven, and so on."

"I understand. It is very clever when one stops to think of it."

"It is not only clever; it is efficient."

"There is one fault with the system, however, which occurs to me."

"What is it?"

"One cannot possibly anticipate precisely what will be desirable to say; and, again, when one is anxious to send a message, such a message is apt to contain expressions that have not been thought of beforehand. I have often experienced that very difficulty in preparing code telegrams or cable messages."

"Certainly. But in that case you use the expression that is nearest to conveying your meaning, leaving it to the recipient of the message to guess actually what is meant. And he can usually guess that, not only from the context, but from his knowledge of the matter itself and the surrounding circumstances."

"That is true."

"A man who possesses the brain of a Doctor Quartz would have no difficulty in reading a correct message from those marked pages if he received word that the message was there, and was concealed among the odd markings; or the even ones."

The warden nodded.

"The method also has the advantage of being actually a cipher, so far as an outsider is concerned."

"How do you mean?"

"Take this particular book, for instance."

"Yes."

"Well, I am an outsider, so far as those two men are concerned. Now, if I knew that the man who is now here in prison had sent word to-day to Quartz that he wished the doctor to read a message from this book, and even though I knew that the message was among the odd numbers, I would still be at fault in reading the signs. Don't you understand that it would be necessary that I should know something about the previous messages, as well as be posted regarding the attendant circumstances?"

"Surely."

"Well, we will leave that part of it, now. When I was talking with Shadow, I was suddenly convinced that they had a method of communication. What it was I could not know or guess at the moment. I was only satisfied in my own mind that such a method existed."

"Yes."

"So I took pains to give him something to think about, and to wish to send to the doctor. I told him that I should take pains to look up his history; that I should not particularly concern myself with hunting for Quartz until I had run Shadow down to some extent. Now, do you recall what I read to you a few moments ago out of that book over there?"

"This one?" asked the warden, picking up the other book.

"Yes. It is a novel—not a well known one, either—called 'The Lost Inheritance.'"

Nick took the book again, and read aloud from it part of the passage he had already read to the warden at the beginning of their discussion, as follows:

"'We have a common enemy whom we must fight together if we would win. He has been here.... Instead of working his animosity upon you....he threatens me.' I think I remarked when I read that passage to you before that it was strikingly appropriate to the occasion."

"Yes. You did."

Nick took his magnifying glass from his pocket, and held it over the page from which he had been reading. Presently he said:

"Didn't this book come from the prison? You need not reply, for I know that it did. It came from the cell of Quartz, too, for here, with the magnifying glass, I can see thumb-nail marks that have been rather carefully obliterated afterward."

The detective threw the book aside carelessly.

"But all that is dead wood now," he said. "It is past and gone, and we have no use for it. The point that I wished to establish is made. The two men

are in communication. But I will ask you, warden, to go right now and give directions to the proper person that Shadow be accommodated without question, if by any chance he should ask to have a certain book brought to him to-day or to-morrow. Go now; I will wait."

The warden departed, and Nick settled himself comfortably to await his return.

"The way to find Quartz again," he told himself when he was alone, "is to watch this man who is here. It seems incredible that a prisoner confined here, without being afforded any liberty at all, should be able to direct us in the search, but I thoroughly believe it will develop in that way. We will see."

The warden was absent fifteen minutes or more. He was smiling when he returned.

"The prisoner has lost no time," he said. "He has already asked for a book—since you talked with him."

"Good. What book?"

"A detective story, strangely enough. A story called 'The Cipher Letter.' I have given orders that all his directions regarding the purchase of the book be carried out exactly as he has given them."

"Good again. Tell me what those directions were."

"There is a book store quite near to the prison, kept by a man named Leary. He asked that the book be purchased there at once, since it was the nearest place. It has been sent for—and a copy of it will be brought here to us as well as taken to him."

"Good again. To-day is the eighth of the month, so we should look for the messages under the odd numbers, eh?"

"I suppose so. But, I say, Carter."

"Well?"

"While we are awaiting for the arrival of the book, suppose you tell me what other thing it was that you had in mind to say to me about the prisoner. You said there was something that you wanted me to do for you in regard to him."

"There is."

"Tell me what it is."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea if you should do it before that book arrives, too. It will give the fellow something else to think about, and it will go far toward inducing him to require still another book by to-morrow, if not again to-day. He will want to send out another message."

"What is it that you want done?"

"Go now and give orders as follows: Have Shadow taken to the shower room and stripped naked. Take every stitch of clothing away from him, and supply him with a new outfit throughout, so that when he is returned to his cell he will not possess a single article that he is wearing now. When he is returned, have him taken to another cell, and leave the one he now occupies empty for a few hours. I want to search it personally."

"Very well."

"In the shower-room have him scrubbed. Not washed simply, but scrubbed—with a stiff brush and with soap. Scrub every part of him, his head most of all. Steam him, so that when he comes from that room there wont be anything left on him but his skin and his hair. In that condition, have him photographed repeatedly in every conceivable position—front, rear, sidewise, sitting, standing, kneeling; you know."

"Yes."

"Before he is clothed again, take him to the Bertillon room and have his measurements taken with great care. I want that done thoroughly—as thoroughly as it is possible to do it. Will you see to it yourself?"

"I will."

"When it is all done, and the man is clothed again, I will talk with him once more—and, unless I am greatly mistaken, after that second talk with me, he will be more anxious than ever to send a message to Doctor Quartz."

The warden started for the door again. He stopped halfway across the room.

"Pardon me, Carter," he said, "but it does seem to me to be a lot of wasted energy to be searching here in this prison for a clue to the locality of Quartz, when he has been twelve days gone from here. It strikes me as rather absurd that this fellow here, who has substituted himself for the real prisoner, should be able to put us on the trail of the man we have lost."

"And yet, warden, it is the only present way of accomplishing quickly what we wish to do. If there is a man alive, besides Quartz himself, who knows where Quartz can be found, that man is the present prisoner."

"I know; but——"

"You could not force him to tell you what he knows if you used thumbscrews, and all the implements of torture of old Nuremberg. That is the kind of man he is. But, he may be led to provide the very information we seek, if he does not suspect our method of seeking it. Our plan is to convince him that we are

seeking it, but to make him suppose that we are seeking it by a certain method, not by a subterfuge. I know what I am about."

"I don't doubt that. I'm not up to that sort of work; and this particular proposition appears to be taking the form of a metaphysical one."

"It is; and for that very reason it is all the better. Now, don't you think you had better give those orders I suggested to you?"

"Yes."

"In the meantime, if the book arrives, I will look it over till you return. I would like to dig out of it the message that Shadow has sent to Quartz to-day if that is possible."

"All right. I won't be absent very long."

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN WITH THE CAMERA EYES.

The warden was absent considerably more than an hour this time. While he was gone, the book was brought into the room to the detective—a copy of "The Cipher Letter." The man who brought it when he gave it into the hand of the detective, said:

"The warden sent this to you, sir. He wished me to say that he is attending to the other matters in person, and will be here himself as soon as possible."

"Very well," replied the detective.

When he was alone he crossed to the warden's desk, drew a pad of paper toward him, opened the book and began to search its pages.

So occupied was he that he lost all notion of the flight of time, and it seemed to him to be only a few moments since the book was brought to him, when the warden appeared.

"I have been nearly through the book," he said. "I will finish in a moment. Keep still until I have quite done, will you?"

"Certainly; only that book cannot possibly have marks in it. It just came from a store."

"True; but here is a case in which I have the advantage of knowing something of what the prisoner wished to say to the man outside the prison; and from the general case I can guess at a little of what he would wish to say in addition to what I know."

"But I don't understand."

"He would wish to tell Quartz substantially what I read from that other book. He would want to inform him of the fact that I have been here, and of what I have threatened to do."

"Well——"

"Please be silent for a little. Then I will talk to you."

After that there was silence in the room while the detective worked on; but at last he leaned back in his chair, and picked up a sheaf of sheets of paper upon which he had written with a pencil. He closed the book and pushed it aside.

"I have written down here everything that I have been able to find which bears directly upon the subject we have in hand," he said.

"Well, if all that is a message from the prisoner to——"

"It isn't."

"What is all that writing about, then?"

"It contains everything I have found which might, by any possibility, form part of such a message. I wrote down each sentence or paragraph as I found it. Then I began the process of elimination. That is, I selected from all of them the few that would be the most likely."

"Well?"

"And when that was done, and the few most likely sentences and paragraphs were written out separately—why, then, I made use of Charles Reade's favorite maxim: 'Put Yourself in His Place.' I put myself in his place; in the prisoner's place; in Shadow's place. Understand?"

"I'm trying to do so."

"I asked myself: If I were Shadow, and if the things had happened to me that have happened to him, and if I desired to send a message to Quartz, what would I pick out of what remains here to include in that message. Understand now?"

"Yes."

"I accomplished it by crossing out words; but substituting in some places words to replace those I had crossed out; by skipping sentences at times. And now here is what I have worked out of it." He passed the single sheet of paper toward the warden.

"No," said the latter. "Read it to me."

"Very well. Here it is:

"'The detective spent an hour with the prisoner, making use of all the ingenuity he possessed to pump the man.... The prisoner was particularly keen. He was also cool, and thoroughly master of himself; and in a sense, of the situation also.... Your accomplice, said the detective, has hidden himself away, but you must tell me how to find him. The prisoner only laughed at the detective.'

"All that forms parts of several paragraphs on one of the pages; then we skip to other pages, taking excerpts here and there, as they seem to apply to the present case. I have made the selections with great care. I omit unnecessary quotation marks; you will understand by the sense of what I read to you."

"Yes," replied the warden.

"Now, I will read on: 'The detective was convinced that he knew the man; or that he might be able to establish the identity of the man.....He realied that much hinged upon doing so....He found that his threats were of no avail with the prisoner, for the latter remained perfectly cool and collected throughout....When the detective left the prisoner finally, he at once sent messages to all parts of the country, giving a description of the man. He hoped that from the replies he would be able to do some good guessing....In discussing the matter with his client—that means you, warden—he insisted that it would be necessary to keep the prisoner in solitary confinement, to permit him to have communication with no one, and to try in every way possible to break his spirit. ....He said: We will abandon the search for the accomplice until we have exhausted every means of obtaining information from this prisoner, and we will not stop at anything in order to do so.'

"Do you see how directly that applies to the present case, warden?" asked Nick.

"Yes. I do."

"There is more yet."

"All right. Go ahead."

"'Such things have been known as innocent men suffering for the guilty....At least, in the present case, the innocent man may be made to think that he will suffer in place of the accomplice....If he is actually brought to the day of execution, there will still be time for him to be forced to confess....He will never do that....The prisoner relies upon promises that have been made to him by his accomplices. ....Just a mere word might set the prisoner free, but he will not utter that word unless——'

"Now, here is a significant sentence which I have selected because I think it applies. It is: 'Perhaps when the worst comes to the worst, and the prisoner finds that there is no hope for him save by confession of the secrets which will betray his accomplice, he will give up, but it is certain that he has got grit enough, and stamina enough to hold out to the last moment. ....But there is a time limit to all things; even to life itself....Let there be no mistake in our understanding of each other in this matter....I should hear from you soon....It is most important that I should see you if that is possible; if not, find some other way to instruct me; one that you know will be effective.'

"That is all, warden; that is, it is all I have thought it necessary to select."

"But you do not know positively that Quartz will make the same selections that you have made when he sends for the book."

"No. Of course I do not know that. I am merely proving a theory. But—the point of the whole thing is this: Shadow will receive some kind of a message from the outside by to-morrow morning."

"It will be the very first that he has received, then."

"All the more important that we should watch for it, and know what it is when it does arrive."

"Say, Carter, I wonder if one thing about all this strikes you at all?"

"What is it?"

"Why, if your theory is the correct one, doesn't it follow that Quartz himself is at this very moment somewhere within easy reach of this prison?"

"Certainly. That is, if he is not here himself within easy reach, he has an agent who is; and an agent would serve my purpose quite as well; even better."

"How so?"

"Because an agent would be easier to trace out than Quartz. No agent of Doctor Quartz could be as wary and as smart as Doctor Quartz himself."

"Wouldn't it be well to have one of your assistants at hand to help you?"

"It would; and it is. Chick is here, and so is Patsy. Both have their orders. Both know exactly what to do; and after I leave you, I shall give each of them the benefit of what has taken place since I got here."

"Good. I begin to realize that you have left nothing unattended to."

"I have endeavored not to do so. Now, tell me about the washing process."

"The prisoner kicked at first, but he finally submitted with a very good grace. He realized that there was no help for it."

"Naturally."

"He asked me if it was all being done at your instigation. I told him it was. After that he kept up a running fire of comment during the entire proceeding."

"Tell me some of the remarks he made; of the ones that impressed you, if any of them did so."

"We scrubbed about six shades of brown from his hair. He is almost a blond now. A shade or two came off his skin, too."

"That is interesting, and it will be a help."

"He said, 'I suppose you will take my picture after this operation.' Then, 'Why don't you skin me and have done with it, and then take a picture of my bones?' Then, 'You ought not to have done this, warden; you will have a hard time now to convince others that I am Doctor Quartz; and that seems to be your game; at least, it seems to be Nick Carter's game.'"

"He referred, I suppose, to the change in his appearance."

"Of course. When we had him posing for the pictures he said:

"'I suppose you are making these pictures for Nick Carter to send away to all parts of the world, aren't you?'"

"Good. What did you say?"

"'Yes,' I told him. 'We shall send them, first, to Scotland Yard, and to Paris, and to the other European cities as well.'

"'Why not try Timbuctoo?' he asked. Oh, he was facetious, all right."

They were interrupted at that moment by the entrance of a servant, who brought a card to the warden. The latter received it, read it, then looked at the detective in surprise.

"It is the card of a man named Sheridan," he said. "He has written on it that he is here at your request. You haven't said anything about that to me. Am I to understand that another person is to be taken into our confidence regarding the escape of Doctor Quartz?" The warden was plainly annoyed, and he showed it.

"Not at all, my dear warden; and the very purpose I had in view when I sent a letter to Sherry and asked him to come here will render it unnecessary that he should be told. However, I shall probably tell him the truth later on. Your secret is as safe with him as it is with me or with yourself."

"Who is he?".

"What! Don't you know who Sherry is? My dear warden, he is 'The Moniker Man.' 'The Man With the Camera Eye.' There is only one Sherry. The police department would have gone out of business sometimes if it had not been for him. When Sherry has once seen a face he never forgets it; and it isn't always necessary that he should see the face, either; sometimes a photograph will answer as well. He is the most feared man by newly-arrested crooks in all the country. If, at any time, in all the years of his life, he has seen this prisoner of yours, or even a photograph of him, he will be able to tell me all about it, where he saw him, and probably will know who the man is. Please have him shown in at once."

"But——"

"And as soon as he is here, send after your prisoner, and have him brought into this room unannounced. That is the best way, warden."

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT THE MONIKER MAN SAW.

The man who came there at Nick Carter's request was brought into the room and introduced to the warden; and thereafter, at a sign from the detective, the warden left the room to go upon the suggested errand.

"What is it all about, Nick?" Sheridan asked, as soon as they were alone.

"It's your game, Sherry; your pet hobby. There isn't another man like you in all the big world. You know that without being told."

"Oh, well, I suppose it's true enough; only I don't deserve any especial credit for it. It is the same sort of a talent with me that lightning calculators have with figures. I know a chap who will take a column of six figures, a page long, and add the whole business at a glance. Correctly, too; but he doesn't know how he does it. Neither do I know how I remember a face. I have tried to tell newspaper reporters about it once or twice, but I might as well try to tell them—well, anything at all that is impossible to describe. With me it is a sixth sense. What is this particular case?"

"You will know presently. Here they come now."

There were steps upon the corridor outside the door; then it opened, and four men entered the room. One of the four was the warden; two of the others were guards—and they were the same two that have been mentioned before; Mayne and Jackson; the fourth man was Shadow.

But Shadow was strangely changed since Nick saw him only a few hours previously.

His hair had then been dark brown, and his skin had been several shades darker than it was now. His eyes, of course, had not altered at all during the process of washing, and they remained that peculiar shade of brown which one sometimes sees in the eyes of a certain class of yellow-haired persons.

The four stepped inside the door, and arranged themselves along the wall of the room, just inside it,

Nobody spoke a word. Shadow seemed to have guessed that this scene was to be a sort of trial, or ordeal, for him.

Sherry arose in his place as they entered. His glance swept across the four men, taking the personality of each one as it passed. The warden, of course, had been in that room only a few moments before.

Nick Carter watched the moniker man; he paid no attention to any other person there; he did not even devote so much as a glance upon Shadow.

A stranger, watching Nick Carter closely at that moment, would have seen the flicker of a smile cross his countenance as he watched Sherry; for the latter, instead of devoting his second glance upon Shadow, permitted his eyes to rest upon the features of Sedgwick Mayne, where he held them for the space of a moment.

Then the glance drifted to Jackson, and there again it rested; but all the time there was not the slightest change of expression in Sheridan's face.

He studied Mayne for a moment; then he studied Jackson, even a longer moment; then he looked at the prisoner.

Nobody spoke. No person there uttered a sound. It seemed almost as if all of them held their breaths; and then Sheridan coolly turned his back upon them all, and resumed the chair he had vacated when they entered the room.

"The prisoner may be returned to his cell now," said Nick, addressing the warden.

He watched them as they turned about to file out of the room, the warden going last; and then as the door was about to close behind the chief official of the prison, Nick called to him:

"Just a moment, warden. Ask the others to wait a second."

The warden stepped back into the room. Nick closed the door.

"Warden," he said slowly, "there has been one phase of this case which I have not mentioned until now. It was my principal reason for asking Sheridan to come here to-day. I will explain about it later; but just at the moment I wish you would go into the prison yourself with the prisoner and the guards. You have arranged to have Shadow returned to a different cell from the one he has been occupying, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Please see that he goes to it directly, and is not permitted to enter his former cell again. And now—isn't it almost time for these guards to have their hour off for eating?"

"It is time now. Just time."

"I thought so. I don't want either of them to be permitted to leave the prison just now. Order them to remain with the prisoner. Give any excuse you please, but *have them locked in the cell with the prisoner* for half an hour, presumably to watch him; and put two more of your guards outside the door of that cell, with instructions that he is not to permit any one of the three men to come out of it until you give the order personally. Will you do it for me?"

"But I don't see——"

"You will presently."

"Oh; all right. You seem to be the master here now. But you are upsetting my system, and these two guards will set up a kick, too, about their meal time."

"Let them kick. What do you care?"

"Well, since this thing happened, I have treated both those men with gloves. I don't want the thing to get out; and there are times when I think that Jackson knows more than he pretends to know."

"Sure thing. They both know more. Sherry will tell you that presently unless I am very greatly mistaken."

"Well, if you insist upon it, of course I will do as you say."

"Warden, hasn't it occurred to you that the substitute prisoner could never have played out his part as he has done it without at least the passive aid of one or both of those two guards?"

"Well, at first it seemed almost incredible that the thing should have been so well worked, and right under their eyes, too."

"It was the very first idea I had about the case, warden—that those two men were, at the least, passive helpers in the affair. No man who wears the name of Sedgwick Mayne would permit himself to be a prison keeper unless he had a very good reason for doing so. But we will discuss that later. Please do now as I have asked. I'll explain why a little later."

The detective turned to Sheridan as soon as the warden had left the room.

"Well, Sherry," he asked, "what do you make of the exposition?"

"It was a regular panorama, Nick. How long a time has Monsieur Vesant been a prison guard, I wonder? Was he the chap you wanted me to see, or was it all of them?"

"Which was Vesant?"

"Oh; don't you know? Or are you only pumping me?"

"I don't know a thing in the light of what you have now discovered, Sherry. I asked you to come here to help me out. You'll do it, won't you?"

"Surest thing you know. Vesant was the big fellow who stood at the left of the lineup. He has got about a thousand aliases, more or less. He's a Frenchman. Vesant is his right and true name. I don't suppose you ever saw him, but you have heard about him under his best and most widely advertised name. Vesant is Bras de Fer, the Ironarm. He used to be a chief of the Apaches in Paris."

"How do you know all this, Sherry?" asked Nick.

"Well, Vesant was wanted for Heaven knows how many crimes. He was finally arrested, but on the way to prison some of his gang interfered with the officers, and he made his escape. Our department was notified when he couldn't be found. We have been on the lookout for him for two years. We've got a dozen different pictures of him; his measurements, and all the particulars."

"You never actually saw him yourself, then?"

"No. But I know that the man who was acting as guard, and who stood at the left of the lineup, is Vesant. Did you know it?"

"No. I suspected that he was not what he appears; that is all. He has probably taken the job here to hide himself away until the French authorities would suppose him to be dead. He has thought that he could hide better here than at large in the streets."

"That's the idea, I think."

"Now, Sherry, what about the others?"

"Well, that other guard is a fake, too. I know him. I don't rely upon any pictures in his case. His name is Jackson——"

"Why, that is the name under which he is serving here."

"Well, Jackson is a common enough name. He has never served a sentence in prison, but there are several indictments out against him. He's the absconding cashier of the Westerly bank, at Westerly, Georgia. You may have read about it in the papers about a year ago."

"But that fellow committed suicide," said the detective, who recalled the case, although he had never had anything to do with it.

"He was said to have committed suicide," replied Sheridan. "The proof that he did not is the fact that he is here, and that I have recognized him. I have several times found that sort of dead ones, Nick. I supposed him to be dead, too, until I saw him just now."

"You are certain about your recognition of him?"

"As certain as I am sure that you are you," was the calm reply. "This is turning out to be a great day for me, Carter."

"Well, how about the third man?" asked the detective.

"The prisoner? I don't know him."

"Did you never see him before? or a picture of him?"

"N-no. At first I thought I had him spotted; but a second look puzzled me. When I am not sure of a man at the first glance, I won't identify him. I'm afraid of making a mistake in a case of that sort."

"How do you explain away that first impression you had of him?"

"I don't explain it away. I don't attempt to do that. But—say, Nick, Doctor Quartz is a prisoner here, isn't he?"

"He is supposed to be. Why?"

"I have seen Quartz quite a number of times. Two or three times I have seen him when he was not aware of it. One of those times was the first time I ever saw him, and that was almost, if not quite, twenty years ago."

"Well?"

"It was before Quartz ran up against you, then; before he had been arrested in this country; before we knew that he was a criminal. It was in Delmonico's old restaurant, where Martin's is located now. I was doing some detective work for the chief, and it took me there. I was seated at a table, and at the one next to me were two men. I merely noticed that they were there at the time. I had no interest in them whatever; but afterward when I saw Quartz I remembered him as having been one of those two men. This chap who stood in this room just now, facing me, was the other one."

Nick Carter gazed at Sheridan with undisguised admiration.

Here was proof indeed of the moniker man's abilities. While the fact that he told to the detective was of no value in pursuing the case in hand, it was, nevertheless, interesting to know that this man who called himself by the name of Shadow had been an intimate of Doctor Quartz all those years.

"Your gift certainly does amount to a sixth sense, Sherry," he said. "Now, if you will pay attention, I will tell you the story of this man. It will interest you, and out of it perhaps we can find something that will be of assistance to me."

CHAPTER IX.

NICK CARTER MAKES A GOOD GUESS.

"Now, Sherry," said the detective, after he had finished the relation of the entire story, just as we know it, "my experience has taught me that there are several ways of skinning a cat."

"Sure thing, Nick."

"The secret of the present hiding place of Doctor Quartz is here in this prison. It is as certain as death that Shadow knows that secret, and that it must be got out of him in one way or another if we do not fall upon it from the outside."

"What are you doing on the outside?"

"I have got my assistants, Chick and Patsy, both busy on that end of it. They are doing what I would be doing now myself if I were not certain that I could get the truth out of this prisoner. They are working up the case from the door of the prison when the supposed lawyer stepped out of it. They can do that as well as I could do it."

"I suppose so."

"In the meantime I want to find a way to make this fellow open up. When I sent for you, I hoped greatly that you would be able to identify him."

"No. I have no recollection of him more than I have told you already."

"Although it goes without saying that Mayne and Jackson have both aided and abetted the criminal doctor in getting away from here, it is extremely doubtful if they know anything which would assist me in tracing him. He is much too wise to have taken either of them into his confidence to that extent."

"I agree with you there."

"I will get the warden to lock them up, and hold them, until you secure warrants for them; then you can return here and claim them. In the meantime I will have had a talk with each of them to find out what they do know; but it won't be much, if anything."

"No. I don't think so, either."

"When those photographs that were just taken are brought to us, you may find something of suggestion in them, Sherry."

"No; that isn't possible. Even if I thought I did find something of the sort, I would not trust myself to rely upon it. If I don't get the moniker of a man at the first glimpse I give it up, wait for something new. That is the only way to make my talent perfect. But if you will take a suggestion, Nick?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"Why don't you try the old game of setting this man free and shadowing him afterward?"

"I have thought of that; but with a man like Quartz to seek for, it is about useless."

"I know. I didn't mean to suggest that Shadow, as he calls himself, would take you to the doctor. What I did mean was this: He would do something, or say something, or act in some way that would give you a line on Quartz—and that line might, eventually, lead you to the man."

"I know. I have thought of all that. As a last expedient, I shall probably resort to it; but for the present I prefer to follow along the lines I have selected."

"How about this book business that you have described to me? Isn't there a possibility that Chick or Patsy, working outside, might get a line on Quartz in that manner?"

"Yes; but there is time enough for that yet. Since I caught onto the book idea, I haven't had a chance to send word to either of my assistants; but I'll put them onto that idea within an hour, and that will be time enough. I did one thing, though, that is exactly in line with it before I came to the prison to-day."

"What was that?"

"I made a personal call upon the postmaster."

"Eh? On the postmaster?"

"Yes. I did a cheeky thing, too."

"Well, that's like you, anyhow. What was it?"

Nick smiled as he replied:

"The postmaster thought it was cheeky, too, at first; but he fell into the idea, all right, when I explained what it was about."

"What did you do? I am interested. I can't just see what the postmaster, in person, would have to do with a case of this kind. Now, the employees of the post office—yes; but the P. M. in person—*well!*"

"Before I made the call upon him I had drawn up, as briefly as possible, an order. I took that order to a printer in New Chambers Street, and had three thousand of them struck off."

"That was cheeky, all right. What was the order?"

"Here is a copy of it. I will read it to you," replied the detective, taking a slip of paper from one of his pockets. "Listen."

"All right."

"'To all employees: You are directed to inspect closely all mail that passes through your hands, from the moment it is collected from the boxes, until it is regularly disposed of. This order continues in force until it is particularly recalled. If any letter, card, or

paper, magazine or printed matter, is found addressed to Q. Shadow, or to Convict Thirteen Hundred and Twenty-three, at the State prison, or to the warden of that prison, you are to mark said matter with your initials, in pencil, and notify the postmaster at once of the fact, together with correct information as to where the matter was collected.' There you are. What do you think of it?"

"It sounds good—if one didn't write the letter in Harlem and mail it at the Battery; or if one didn't write the letter at Sing Sing and mail it at Auburn; or if the letter were not written in one place and mailed miles away from that place."

"Of course."

"A letter always bears the imprint of the station from which——"

"Of course; but each station includes a wide area of boxes from which collections are made. Ah; here is the warden again. Well, warden, how do your two guards like the idea of being locked up?"

"Like it! You should hear them kick. And, say, one of them, at least, it dead scared, too."

"Which one is that?" asked Sheridan. "The one you call Mayne?"

"No. He is as cool as a morning in October. It's the other one."

"What did Shadow have to say about it?" asked Nick.

"He seemed to be highly amused. He grinned; but he said nothing at all."

"How about those pictures?"

"I have the proofs of them here. Will you see them now?" The warden glanced apprehensively at Sheridan.

"Yes. I have told Sherry the entire story, warden. It was best for many reasons that he should know about it. Let me have the proofs."

Nick inspected them, one after another, passing them along to his friend as he did so; but the latter only shook his head when he studied them.

"Nothing doing, Nick," he said when he had examined the last one. "They do not help me a little bit. There is nothing new. I think, if you are through with me now, I will catch the next train back and look after those warrants for Mayne and Jackson. By the way, warden, they are to be kept in pickle for me. Mr. Carter will tell you about it."

"I am going to have Shadow taken into the consultation room for me again right away," the detective said. "Would you like to be present at the interview, Sherry?"

"No. If I were present with him for a thousand years now it would do no good. The only time I ever saw the fellow before was the one I told you about."

"Then will you do me a favor as you go out?"

"Sure."

Nick turned to the desk and wrote rapidly for a time. Then he folded the sheet and gave it to Sheridan.

"If you will leave that note at Conner's drug store for Chick I'll be obliged," he said. "It is barely possible that you may meet him or Patsy, and if you do, stop with either one of them long enough to tell all you know about this case. That note will tell them what I want done, and it was arranged that one of them should call at the drug store for a message within an hour from now. Now, warden, if you are ready, I'll have a short talk with the prisoner again. I hope those photographs are being made; eh?"

"Yes. You will have a full set of them within another hour or less."

"All right. I'd like you to remain with me while I talk with Shadow."

The man was brought to them a few minutes later, and he entered the room with a smile on his face, which, by the way, was handsome after a fashion.

"You seem to be immensely pleased about something," said the detective as soon as the door was closed.

"Why not? I have long wanted to abuse the warden and the prison itself, but in my fondest dreams I could never have originated such splendid and lurid abuse as I have just been listening to."

"From your friends, Mayne and Jackson?" asked Nick.

"The same. You seem to have found them out."

"Oh, yes, we have devious ways of finding things out. They are your friends, aren't they?"

"They have attempted to be so—in their own way."

"I see. We have found out something about you also."

"Really? That is interesting. What is it?"

"For one thing, that you are an old-time acquaintance of Doctor Quartz."

"Oh. I could have told you that without ill effect upon myself had you thought to ask the question. Yes, I have known the doctor many years. I suppose that person who was in the room with us when I was exhibited told you that; eh?"

"Yes."

"I have seen him once before to-day. It was many years ago, and I can't say precisely where it was, save only that it was in a restaurant somewhere. I re-

member that there were tables and people about us; but——"

"It was at Delmonico's restaurant. You were there with Quartz."

"Quite right. I remember now. And he remembered it, too, did he? Now, do you know, that is rather remarkable. I had supposed myself to be the only living man who had such a memory for faces, and here I find is another. Is that all that you have found out concerning me?"

"Not quite," said Nick. "This—also."

The detective extended toward the prisoner, as he spoke, the page of penciled writing he had made from the book called "The Cipher Letter." He held the book itself in his other hand.

The prisoner took the sheet of paper in his hand and glanced at it.

He started then and raised his eyes quickly to the detective. Then he saw the book, and apparently recognized it; and without a word he returned his gaze to the sheet of paper, and read through to the end all that the detective had written there—the same matter that Nick had read aloud to the warden somewhat earlier.

As he read his face paled; his frown deepened; his lips tightened over his teeth; but in other ways he controlled himself admirably, although it must have been a great shock to him to find his secrets uncovered in that manner.

"You are smarter than I supposed," he said at last when he had finished reading the page.

"I have heard of the cipher used by a great French doctor once upon a time when he was confined in the Bastile," replied the detective. "I have also heard something new about you that is of added interest. To-day, when you were here in this room with me, I called you an Englishman; now I find that you are a Frenchman instead." This was a guess, pure and simple, and Nick made it only because of what Sheridan had told him about Mayne; but it told, and it told hard. Instantly the detective determined to make the most of it.

"Warden," he said, "please have Mayne brought to this room at once."

CHAPTER X.

BAITING AN EX-APACHE.

For a moment after the departure of the warden on the errand on which Nick Carter had sent him, the prisoner kept his gaze fixed steadily upon the detective as if he were trying hard to determine in his own mind what this last move of the representative of the law might mean.

The man preserved his supercilious smile the while, and outwardly did not lose the calmness and self-poise of his demeanor; but nevertheless Nick could see that the fellow was perturbed more than he would have cared to admit.

Clues in criminal cases are oftenest found in the most unexpected places, rather than in those where they are sought for. A chance word will, at times, open up the way of an entire investigation. The old saying that it is a little straw that shows which way the wind is blowing is strangely true in the life of a detective, and long training had taught Nick Carter to make use of every possible chance, and even subterfuge, in following up a case.

The fact that out of all the theories, all the efforts, all the clues, and all the chances taken and pursued in a criminal investigation, nine out of ten—or even a much greater proportion than that—prove to be barren and fruitless, is not a deterent; is not even a disappointment. There is always the tenth one, or the hundredth one; and the discovery of that one, after many blind leads, is proportionately satisfactory.

Nick had really supposed that this man before him now was an Englishman.

Until the instant of making that haphazard remark in reference to Mayne, he had supposed that Quartz and Shadow had merely bribed the two guards to assist them, and that the guards knew nothing more about the two men who had been prisoners there than appeared on the surface.

But with the making of the remark it came home to him that there might be, and doubtless was, an old-standing acquaintance between the ex-Apache chief of Paris—Stuyvesant Mayne, otherwise Monsieur Vesant—and this mysteriously substituted prisoner.

The consultation room, in which he and Shadow were standing facing each other, has already been described; just now it is necessary to call particular attention to it again.

A glass partition crossed it, dividing off one-third of its length, and beyond the glass partition guards are supposed to remain on watch while a prisoner is in consultation with his attorney; and those on watch are enabled to see all that takes place in the larger compartment, but cannot hear a word that is said there.

A moment after the departure of the warden to bring Mayne to the room, Nick motioned to the

guards, who were waiting behind the glass partition; and they came through the small door of glass to him.

"Take the prisoner into that glass room and keep him there until I signal to you to return him here," he directed them, and he waved his hand toward the other compartment.

For a moment only it seemed as if the prisoner was on the point of resistance to this last order, but he evidently thought better of it, for with a toss of his head and another of his supercilious smiles, he stepped briskly toward the glass door.

He was well-disposed of, and the detective was alone in the consultation part of the room when the warden returned with the Frenchman whom Sheridan had recognized and spotted.

The guard had not got over his anger yet.

Whether he suspected that he had been identified or not could not be determined; but an angry scowl was on his face, and his eyes were fierce when he confronted the detective in that room.

Nick Carter did not temporize at all in what he had to do. He went to the point at once with the plan he had so suddenly decided to carry out.

He addressed Monsieur Vesant, alias Stuyvesant Mayne, in French.

"I have the satisfaction of greeting the eminent 'Monsieur Vesant,'" he said, with irony.

The eyes of the Frenchman glinted fire.

Instantly there arose before him the entire gamut of his misdeeds, and he realized, as quickly as a thought that he had been discovered, and that there was no hope for him; that he would be returned forthwith to Paris to stand trial for his crimes, and that death would be his portion.

He did not speak or otherwise utter a sound; but he darted forward with the assured suddenness of a snake that is coiled and ready for action.

His arms shot outward, long and sinewy; his hands clinched, and it seemed as if he were about to strike after the manner of most men under like circumstances.

But instead of that he resorted to the Savate method of fighting; and, while he made the gesture with his hands, it was one of his feet that flew upward.

If Nick Carter had been less versed than he was in all the methods of fighting, and if he had not half-suspected that Vesant would resort to the Savate method of warfare, he must have been taken off his guard; as it was, he was prepared.

A Frenchman who is adept in Savate will use his feet with the same dexterity with which a practiced pugilist of our own country makes use of his hands; and the foot is a terrible weapon when used with practiced skill.

But now as Vesant used his right foot, and raised it with a sudden, snakelike motion and directness that would have taken the detective under the ear and felled him, Nick side-stepped, seized the man's ankle, twisted it, exerted his own strength, and so threw Vesant whirling into one corner of the room.

And the instant the man fell Nick followed up the advantage.

He leaped upon the now prostrate man, clasped his arms together behind them, and snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists more quickly than it takes to tell about it.

"Get up, Vesant," he ordered, stepping backward again and still using the French language. "Don't try any of your Apache games on me."

The Frenchman rose slowly to his feet. For the moment he was conquered; but he was not entirely subdued for all that.

"Stand there," ordered the detective, pointing toward a spot in the middle of the floor. "That is right. Now look toward the glass partition behind which you were seated when your old acquaintance, who now prefers to call himself by the name of Shadow, came here to substitute himself for Doctor Quartz. Do you see your friend there?"

Vesant did not reply. He only scowled.

"How do you suppose you could have been recognized for the man you are—how do you think it was possible to identify you with Vesant if not by the help of that man there?" the detective demanded.

Vesant could not answer that.

He had already thought of the matter in the brief time that had been given him. There was apparently no possible way by which he could have been identified as Vesant unless somebody had betrayed him; he did not associate the strange talent of Sheridan with the matter. He ground his teeth together in rage when Nick Carter asked the question.

"Don't you think that Shadow has talked more than he ought?" the detective continued.

"The monsieur would not tell," muttered the man.

"Ah!" thought the detective. "The blow has had its effect. I've got them now."

"Well, the detective said aloud, "it's your turn now. What have you got to say?"

"Nothing," said the French outlaw. "If one man

chooses to be a weakling and a fool, that is no reason why I should be one."

All the time Vesant kept his eyes fixed angrily upon the other prisoner, who was beyond the glass partition, and this was what Nick Carter wanted, for he knew that it would give the other one the impression that Vesant was talking about him. That was the impression that the detective wished to create.

"Vesant and you were partners in the old days," Nick continued, still guessing, but aiming very close to the mark, as he afterward discovered. "You recognized him instantly through that glass when he came here to see Quartz; and later he recognized you more easily, even, as you attended to his wants in your capacity of guard. The monsieur, as you call him, knows too well the extremity in which you stand. It is a short trip now back to Paris; it will be a shorter one for you to the guillotine after you have arrived there. You are badly wanted, Bras de Fer."

"Ah! You know that name, too?" He turned like a tiger toward the detective, but the latter warned him away with a gesture.

But Nick had accomplished the purpose he sought. He motioned to the warden, and to the other guard who had accompanied them into the room.

"Take Monsieur Vesant, alias Bras de Fer, away," he said shortly. "Shut him up in a solitary cell, and see to it that no one speaks to him; no one. Vesant, I will give you half an hour in which to think things over. If you are prepared to talk, by that time I will be present for you to talk to. Take him away, warden."

He was taken away; and then by a gesture Nick indicated that Shadow was to be returned to the room.

"Now, my man," he said, "what do you think of the situation in which you find yourself?"

"I think that you are an exceedingly clever man," was the calm reply.

"You realize that we have succeeded in identifying you, do you?"

"On the contrary, I thoroughly realize that you have not done so, my friend. Even that ex-Apache who has just been here could not identify me. You have had all your trouble and your interesting byplay for nothing. Bah; return me to my cell."

The warden stepped forward and interrupted them.

"I'll make a bargain with you, Shadow," he said; and Nick waited to hear what the warden might propose.

"Well, what is it?" the prisoner asked.

"If you will tell where Quartz is now so that we can get him, I will send after him. The moment he is returned here and is again a prisoner, I give you my word that you shall be set at liberty, escorted to a steamship, and supplied with a ticket to the other side. You shall leave this country a free man."

Nick Carter did not endorse this proposition—would not have endorsed it; but nevertheless he waited to hear what reply Shadow would make.

He saw that same supercilious smile curl the lip of the prisoner, and then the reply came slowly enough, but none the less emphatic in its meaning.

"If you were to offer me, in addition, the finest mansion that adorns the Boulevard Hausemann, in Paris, with a retinue of servants and a bank account to support it, I would not tell you anything at all. Moreover, I will not reply to another remark that is made to me."

He kept his word, too.

Although Nick wasted some time in plying him with questions, he steadily declined to make replies to any of them by so much as a negative.

"Take him back to his cell," said the detective at last; "and, warden, I would suggest that the order of silence be administered to him at once. Instruct the guards that he is not to be spoken to or answered further than is necessary to supply his actual wants. We will see what that will do for him."

As the warden and the detective returned together to the private quarters of the former, he said to Nick quite suddenly:

"Carter, has it occurred to you that it might be possible that—that—that this man, after all, may be Doctor Quartz himself?" and Nick laughed aloud.

"My dear warden," he said, "I fear that you have been reading detective stories. I have a hunch that somewhere you have run across the exploits of one Arsene Lupin; eh? But, my dear sir, nobody ever did those things in real life. Sometimes they go very well in a certain class of fiction, but such things as you suggest never happen, really. Don't worry, warden. The case is working out all right. We will recover possession of Doctor Quartz. We'll find him."

CHAPTER XI.

THE CIPHER LETTER.

It is a far cry from New York to Paris, even in these days of cables and wireless, for as yet there are things which must be transferred by the comparatively slow methods of the mails; photographs, for instance.

The photographs taken of Shadow were dispatched to Nick Carter's friend, the chief of the secret police of Paris, that same evening; after that it was necessary to await a reply, which the detective had directed should be sent by cable.

After sending them, Nick waited at the prison till the following day, for his work there was not all done yet. He wished particularly to watch the mails the following day, believing that Quartz, having heard of the prisoner's purchase of a book called "The Cipher Letter," would attempt to send a message into the prison in reply.

In the evening he went out and sought the drug store where he had arranged to see Chick, or to leave word for his assistants, in case it were necessary to do so; and he saw and talked with both of them, giving them all necessary instructions regarding the prosecution of the work on the outside.

It was not until the middle of the day following that the mails brought anything to the mysterious prisoner; but then the warden sought the detective, carrying in his hand a printed paper that was neatly fastened within a wrapper and addressed to——

"A prisoner named Shadow, in the care of a detective named Carter," etc., etc.; and the writing was very plainly that of Doctor Quartz.

"Quartz knows that I am here," he told the warden. "This addressed wrapper is just a bit of his fondness for sarcasm."

"Then, in that case, since Quartz evidently intended the paper to fall into your hands before it went to the prisoner, it is not likely to contain any message at all, is it? Or, if it should, won't the message be misleading?"

"I don't know. Quartz is a strange man. He works by contraries. I should say that it is all the more likely, for the very reasons you name, to contain a hidden message. We will examine it very carefully."

He cleared off the table and spread one side of the papers—it was an evening paper of the preceding day—open before him. Then, with his magnifying glass in hand, he bent over it.

The paper contained a marked paragraph; but that was not significant, for who would send to any person a paper of the preceding day without marking a paragraph by way of excuse for sending it? And the marked paragraph seemed to have no significance.

It was simply a stick of type which bore a pencil mark around two of its corners; the upper right-hand one, and the lower left-hand one. Each mark formed two-thirds of a regular bracket—that is, was made of two marks which formed a perfect triangle.

The detective studied those marks for a time, and then began a systematic examination of the printed matter in the paper; and at once he was interested, for he found that all the way down each column there were faint dots made with the sharp point of a pencil, and that they were located either directly above or directly below a printed letter in each case.

"Take a pencil and a sheet of paper, warden," he said. "As I call out letters write them down. There is a message here, if we can find it; but you can trust Quartz for having made it as obscure as possible."

He began then to call out letters to the warden—the printed letters which bore the penciled dots over or under them; and this continued until the sheet of paper that the warden was using was filled, and another one like it had been half filled.

But, then, when the detective took the sheets of paper and endeavored to make sense of the letters so selected, he found only a confused jumble of them, which meant nothing at all.

"Wait," he said. "That marked paragraph means something."

He read the paragraph over again, but could make nothing of it. Then he drew a blank bit of paper toward him and made a mark upon it, in imitation of the marks surrounding the paragraph.

"Humph!" he said aloud. "That mark looks like a figure seven. The horizontal line is shorter than the perpendicular one." He seized the newspaper again, holding it upright before him, and studying it. Then he inverted it, and studied it again.

"Whether I hold the paper right side up or upside down, it is the same," he said. "The two-thirds bracket formed by each mark represents a figure seven. Seven; wait."

He began to make more letters on another sheet of paper, referring each time he made one to those that the warden had made under his directions—and words began to form before him.

After a moment, however, he stopped again, once more puzzled, while the warden looked on, almost holding his breath; and then, after figuring in that manner for a time, the detective exclaimed:

"I've got it, warden. It's clever, too. That is a figure seven around the paragraph; but the meaning of it is clear. Look. The first letter that has a dot over it is O; see?"

"Yes."

"Well, if I count backward, seven letters from the O, I discover the letter I. Now, the next marked letter here is a B—a small b, and the mark is under it instead of over it. See?"

"Yes."

"So, instead of counting backward from the marked letter, I count forward, because the dot is under it instead of over it; and I find the letter H. By following that rule I find the plainly written message, 'I have received and understood your message.' That is as far as I have gone yet. Now wait."

"But why do you sometimes count backward, and sometimes count forward, for your letter, and how do you know when to do either?" insisted the warden, who was interested.

"Well, in the cases of the letters b, d, f, h, l, t, it is necessary, because of the shape of the printed letters, to make the dots under them. In the case of g, j, p, q, y, and other letters, it is easier to make the dots above them. The cipher simply conforms to an arbitrary rule that when the letter is dotted above, it means read the letter that is seven behind it in the alphabet; and when the letter is dotted under it, read the letter that is seven ahead of it. Now wait and I will read the entire message."

He wrote rapidly after that; and here is the message which he finally unraveled from the maze—which, in fact, was exceedingly simple once the key was discovered.

"'I have received and understood your message. It is true that you are in danger, but I will keep my promise and get you out of that prison. No matter how. I have thought of a way. But here is a scheme that you may attempt; there is a chance that it will work.' I have supplied the punctuation marks myself, warden," said the detective, who was reading aloud. "Now to continue:

"'Nick Carter is not likely to offer you any inducement to tell what you know; but the warden is extremely prone to do so. He is in a pickle, and would like to get out of it by any means in his power. Therefore pretend to weaken. You can play the part. Offer to tell all you know about me. Tell them where I am hiding, and offer to take the warden and three men to that place with you, Carter included, if the warden insists upon it. Take them on condition that if I am captured you will be set free. That will have a good sound. Of course I will not be captured, but you will be set free. I will see to that. My only desire is to get you outside the prison; then I can rescue you. Take them to the place where you know I am staying, and if it is done at all, it must be done during the night of one week from to-day—that is, one week from the night following the date of this paper, and figure to get there as soon after midnight as possible. I give you all that time so that you can plan accordingly, for you must not weaken too soon. They would suspect.

"'Take them to the right place; the real place where you suppose me now to be in hiding. I have found another place where even you do not know where I am. I do not trust even you too far. But I will be at the appointed place at the right time, and if you work out your half of the scheme, you will be freed that night.

"'You may, or may not, as you please, take the man Mayne into your confidence. He may be valuable to us, or he may not. I leave that to you to decide; but if he were one of the men who accompanied you, and Jackson were another, it would be so much the easier of accomplishment. You need not attempt to reply to this. Send me no more messages. I will not look for them, for Carter is wise enough to get onto it. Beware of him. You don't half realize his possibilities. If I send you another paper, or magazine, the magic number will be Three, no matter what the paragraph mark may suggest.'"

"Is that all?" asked the warden.

"Yes."

"It is too bad that he doesn't give you an idea of where his hiding place is."

"He is too cute for that. But you see now what your offer to Shadow would have amounted to if he had accepted it. He will be in line to accept it now."

"It is amazing how easy it is to send a cipher message, if one only uses a little ingenuity, isn't it?"

"Ciphers are the easiest things in the world to manufacture; often, too, they are easy to read. I have made a study of ciphers all my life. My father did before me."

"What will be your next move, Carter?"

"Nothing. We will wait. In the meantime you will get an offer from Shadow to betray the doctor."

"Then you intend that he shall have this paper, and read his message?"

"Certainly. And when he makes the offer to betray Quartz, according to his instructions here, you will reply to him by handing him this written transcript of the message. It will startle him some."

"And then——?"

"Then will take care of itself. I don't know now just what will happen then, or exactly what will be determined by that time."

"Quartz evidently isn't very far away from this prison right now."

"I should not be surprised if he were within half a dozen blocks of it," replied the detective.

"How would it do to institute a house-to-house search for him?"

"You might as well attempt to find a mouse in a pile of shavings a mile high, warden."

"But, according to that letter, even the prisoner cannot betray him now, for he doesn't know where he is."

"No—— But he knows where he was; and in some way we must get that out of him."

"Why do you want to know that?"

"Can't you guess?"

"I must confess that I do not see of what value the information would be to us now," said the warden.

"Doesn't Quartz intimate here that he will be there, or at least that he will have somebody there to act for him, one week from to-night at midnight?"

"Yes. And also that he will have arranged some plan by which he will be enabled to overcome a number of men who are supposed to be sent out to capture him. We must not forget that."

"Oh, I haven't forgotten it. But I think I know what means he would employ in such a case as that. I know Quartz. Therein lies all my advantage over him and his plans."

"He might have a force sufficient to overcome——"

"If you mean a force of men, you can rely upon it that he will be entirely alone."

"Do you mean to say that he would go to that appointed place alone to overcome half a dozen men, if I should take them, and that he would expect to succeed?"

"Precisely that, for he would not attempt to conquer you in the usual way. He would resort to Quartzonian methods. Fortunately, I can guess pretty nearly what this particular method would be."

CHAPTER XII.

A CLEVER PLOT TO KILL.

Several things of interest happened during the six days that followed.

Sheridan reappeared at the prison with warrants for the two men who had masqueraded as prison keepers and guards, and took them away with him. But Bras de Fer, the Ironarm, otherwise Monsieur Vesant, positively refused to say another word in reference to his old acquaintance who was called Shadow.

"I will get even with him later on," he said, "if I live. If I do not, some one else will do so." He was sent to Paris ultimately.

Chick and Patsy, with Nick Carter to direct them, used every effort that could be thought of to find the hiding place of Doctor Quartz, but without avail; they were as far from knowing the truth at the end of the six days as they had been in the beginning.

Shadow sent for the warden one day, and said he wanted a private talk with him. The warden had the prisoner taken to the consultation room, and saw him alone, according to the instructions he had received from Nick Carter.

"When we were last in this room together," said Shadow, "you made me an offer, which I have determined to accept, if you are still of the same mind about it."

"What was it?" asked the warden.

"You offered to set me free, and to send me out of the country if I would reveal to you the hiding place of Doctor Quartz."

"Well?"

"I am prepared to do that now, if you are prepared, in turn, to keep your agreement."

"Where is the hiding place? Tell me that, and then I will make terms with you," replied the warden.

"Are you prepared to stand by what you said about it?" insisted the prisoner.

"I am not prepared to answer that question until I know more about what you have to tell me. Where is the hiding place?"

"I will have to take you to it. I will have to guide you there; but you may take that detective, Nick Carter, with you, and two, or even three other men, if you like."

"How does it happen that if you are able to guide me there, you cannot tell me how to find the place without you? It sounds fishy to me."

"It is part of the condition I make, that is all."

"You are not in a position to make conditions, Shadow."

"Perhaps not; but——"

"You do know where the place is, and you could direct me to it if you desired?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure that Quartz is there?"

"Yes."

"Now?"

"Yes."

"Are you aware of the fact that if you lie to me, I have the right to meet you on the same ground, and deceive you?"

"Yes."

"And you swear that Quartz is there, in that hiding place now?"

"Yes."

"Then tell me where it is, and I will take you there. If Quartz is there, and we capture him when I take you there, you shall be set free at once. But you must tell me where the place is now, at once; otherwise our bargain is all off; and if I find you have deceived me in the slightest degree, in any way, our bargain is all off. Do you agree to that?"

"Yes."

"Where is the place?"

"Do you know the old church in Granby Street that is deserted; that is in ruins; that the building inspectors have condemned, and that is to be torn down soon?"

"Yes."

"The hiding place is there, in the cellar under it. I need not tell you how to gain admittance to the real hiding place in that cellar, but I will show you how to find it. Unless you know how to do that, warning will be given of your approach, and Doctor Quartz——"

"Wait. Do you, Shadow, assure me that you have received no communication from Quartz, and that this arrangement is not part of a plot that has been hatched up between you to liberate you, and to make his own permanent escape possible at the same time. Do you assure me of that?"

"Yes; I so assure you, positively."

"Very well. You will be returned to your cell now. Later I will see you again. When you are locked in your cell, read what is contained in this paper;" and the warden handed the prisoner a transcript of the message from Quartz that Nick Carter had deciphered.

But Shadow did not wait to inspect the contents of the paper. He opened it at once; and as he glanced at it, he uttered a cry and fell backward upon a chair, half fainting.

"You see," said the warden, "I have been awaiting this moment. I am entirely freed from any promise I have made to you. It was to be to-night at twelve o'clock that you were to conduct us to that place, and Doctor Quartz was to overcome us all. Mr. Carter believes that he knows how it was to be accomplished; at least we are going to give Quartz a run for his money. But you won't be in it, Shadow. You will be here; and I haven't a doubt that before another day Quartz will be here to keep you company. Take the prisoner to his cell," he ordered, when he had summoned the guard; and then he returned to the detective, who was waiting for him.

The other thing that happened that day—and it may as well be told here—was the receipt of a cable message from Paris. It read:

"Photographs received. Identified. Original is a Spaniard by birth. Known as El Sombre—the Shade, or Shadow. Wanted in Madrid, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, for various crimes. Paris for suspected murder. Will send for him and apply for requisition and extradition papers. Thanks. He was one time intimate of criminal named Doctor Quartz, of whom you know something."

It was signed by the chief of the secret police of Paris. It was of no especial benefit to the detective, although it probably was a great satisfaction to the Paris chief that the man had been found.

When the warden returned from his interview with El Sombre, and sought the presence of Nick Carter, who was waiting for him, the time was two o'clock in the afternoon of the date that had been fixed by Quartz in his cipher letter for the rescue.

During the days that had passed, Nick had thought deeply upon the subject, trying to determine in his own mind just what method Doctor Quartz would be apt to employ in the effort to overcome, unaided, four men; the four to include the warden, two prison guards, and Nick Carter himself.

It was plain to Nick that Quartz would not even attempt such a thing by actual force. By what, then?

Why, by resort to his knowledge of drugs and chemicals; and if he used such a method, it must follow that he had a means for protecting himself from the effect of the fumes he used, otherwise he himself would fall a victim to them.

Or did Quartz intend, literally, to kill them all, El Sombre included? That would be quite in keeping with the character of the man.

If Quartz could induce all of them to enter a place where he could suffocate them with some sort of

deadly fumes, he would be rid of Nick Carter for all time, his debt would be paid, in a way, to Shadow, and he would be free himself from the fear of pursuit.

And Nick knew that Quartz would be on the watch for their approach at midnight that night. He knew that Quartz would wait until they had entered the place before he began his last act—and so, as soon as the warden took the information he had obtained to the detective, Nick hurried away alone, but picked up Patsy and Chick on the way, and went to the condemned church building that Shadow had indicated so plainly.

He relied upon the two facts that Quartz was in hiding, and that he would not be hiding in that particular place which, according to his letter to Shadow, he had already deserted for a better one. He knew that during the day, wherever Quartz was hiding, he would keep out of sight.

Nick had already provided himself with certain accessories to be used in what he wished to do, and followed by his two assistants, he broke into the church through the old front entrance; and from the interior he removed boards from the flooring, and so made their way into the cellar.

It was necessary now that whatever work Nick Carter did there, it must be done so deftly that when Quartz should come to the place at nine or ten o'clock that night to prepare for his victims, there should be nothing to lead him to suspect that others had been there before him; and so, with the aid of his two assistants, he worked there for almost an hour, preparing the way for what was to be done that night. When they did leave the place and return to the prison, all was prepared, and Nick was confident that Quartz, keen as he was, would not see anything to make him suspect what had been done.

* * * * * * *

At midnight that night, five men stole through the darkness toward the old church. One of the five had been made-up by Nick Carter, and was dressed to represent El Sombre; and in the darkness he looked the part.

They passed into a shed from which entrance could be had to the cellar, for Nick had discovered that this was the means used by Quartz. They paused inside the shed for a moment, and then they pushed open a deal door, paused for an instant, stepped through into the pitchy darkness beyond—and instantly all of them ran forward as if their very lives depended upon their haste.

The boards were removed from a place in the flooring over their heads as they advanced; a ladder shot downward; they seized upon it, and climbed upward as if they were possessed—and they climbed out into the body of the church above safely, and lowered the boards into place.

They ran noiselessly to the front entrance of the church, Nick taking the lead. They dashed outside—and then they crept on all fours, close to the wall of the church, around it, toward the rear. As they crept forward, they heard a crash as of breaking glass inside.

When Nick Carter came in sight of the shed through which they had entered the cellar, he could see the figure of a man standing there in the darkness, leaning against the building, and he was able to identify the somewhat portly outlines of Doctor Quartz.

He crept forward; he was followed by the others of his party; the figure of the silent man had its back toward him; he crept closer; he raised himself slowly; he drew back his right arm, and then he leaped forward suddenly, striking out with his fist, and using all his latent powers.

The man he struck fell like a log; and the man was Quartz.

Later it was discovered that four immense glass jars of nitric acid had been placed on a shelf in that cellar, and that they were toppled from the shelf by Doctor Quartz merely by the jerking of a rope which led to him outside. If Nick Carter and his friends had been inside that cellar when the jars of nitric acid were shattered, they would have been almost instantly suffocated by the fumes of it.

But, as it was, Quartz was taken back to his cell in the prison.

THE END.

A pretty girl handing a railroad ticket to the conductor, a telegram and a quick stroke of wit, are the chief points in the making of the mystery that next week's story gives Carter to unravel. No one of these points in itself is particularly promising, and yet, put together, they hold even the peerless Nick for a while in the hottest kind of water. The story is called "A Pupil of Doctor Quartz; or, Nick Carter's Accidental Clue." You'll enjoy going through the surprises of this tale along with the great detective, and you'll be most surprised of all when you see by what a simple method he went to work on the case. Out next week in No. 696.

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THE SQUIRE'S SWEEPSTAKES.

At the races, which formed an important feature of the annual county fair at Flickerville, old Squire Scudder was always an authority, a respected figurehead, and often heavily interested in the issues.

He was rich and worthy, but not clever. But what he lacked in mental profundity he made up for in social expansion. His hospitality was genuine, if his judgment was faulty; broadness was his forte rather than intensity; and his defective knowledge in horseflesh was more than supplied by the cues he received from his favorite nephew, Jack Malden, who was a thoroughbred country sport, a cool card, and a knowing 'un, whose frequent junketings between Flickerville and the great metropolis, with a lifelong association with turfites, had peculiarly fitted him for seconding the old gentleman in his rather fictitious pretentions in the same field.

So it chanced one day at the last fair that Squire Scudder was overwhelmed at receiving the following dispatch:

"DEAR UNCLE: I have secured a splendid mare for the second hurdle race (Scudder's Sweepstakes). Ramshackle, by Imp. Chuckaluck, out of Watershed, by Kickaway, out of Wintergreen. She's a stepper, and bound to win. Back her for all your pile, and whatever you've got left of mine. She ain't much to look at, but a miracle to go. Will send her up by the boat to-morrow, so be ready to receive her at the landing. I shan't be on hand till morning of race; but trust grooming, advertising, and everything to your watchful eye. JOHN MALDEN."

The squire was in ecstasies.

The steamboat landing at which the expected treasure was to arrive was a dozen miles or so from Flickerville, and he made every preparation to drive down for it on the following morning. But in the interim he advised the editor of the *Flickerville Flag* of the coming event, besides notifying his acquaintances.

The result was that on the following morning, when the squire, with a groom at his side, drew up at the tavern for a parting smile before taking the road for W——, the steamboat landing, the whole town was agog with excitement. The *Flag* had come out with a flaring editorial notice, the squire's friends had "given away" the confidentially imparted item everywhere, and every one was wild with wonder as to what sort of horse flesh Jack Malden's new purchase would prove to be.

They crowded about his buggy wheels, and some gentlemen ordered out their teams to follow, so great was their impatience. And when the squire, with a knowing wink and a swelling breast, whipped away, they gave him a parting cheer, as though he were on a mission to receive an ambassador.

The steamer had already landed her live stock when they reached the dock. There were but two horses—a noble-looking, bright-bay mare, and another, also a mare, but otherwise having but little in equine commonality with her companion.

"What horse have you come for, squire?" called out the boat clerk, who was checking some packages on the dock.

"That must be her," said the squire, springing lightly from the buggy, and indicating the bright bay by a delighted wave of his whip. "My newvy was wrong, though, when he said she wasn't much on looks. Gad! she's a picture!"

"Something wrong, I guess. That bay is a stepper called Whetstone, and consigned to Mr. Bullet, down at South Farms. Here he is coming for her."

"So that's Whetstone, eh?" cried a gentleman, who had just driven up, and betraying in his voice both supreme surprise and overwhelming delight. "By love! my agent in —— has secured me a prize for the small amount I ordered him to pay. Tom," to his groom, "fasten her halter to the wagon here, and let's be off at once. Morning, Squire Scudder! What animal are you looking for?"

"Mine must be still on the boat," said Scudder, looking around perplexedly. "I'm looking for a flyer my newvy, Jack Malden, advises me he has shipped by this boat—Ramshackle, by imported Chuckaluck, out of Watershed, by Kickaway, out of Wintergreen."

"That's Ramshackle, then," cried the clerk, running to the gang plank, that was about to be run in, while Mr. Bullet and some Flickerville gentlemen who had driven up roared with laughter at the sudden change that came over the squire's face as the sorry-looking fellow traveler of Whetstone was led out to him by the dock master.

"Hold on! there must be some mistake," cried the squire.

"None at all," replied the clerk, from the guard of the boat, which was now pushing out into the stream. "A particular friend of Mr. Malden, Captain Quip, came down with both mares to the wharf, and pointed out that beauty as Ramshackle, consigned to you. Groom her well, squire."

The last words were laughingly shouted over the water, and, amid the continued mirth of his friends, Scudder ruefully inspected his newly acquired treasure.

Ramshackle was certainly not a beauty.

In color, she was a grimy black, with four white feet and a gray patch on her nose. In form, she was of the shaky, tottery, bow-backed, barrel-sided variety. She was knock-kneed, lank-withered, gothic-hipped, thin-flanked, crumbly-hoofed. Her tail was a mere wisp. Her neck stuck straight out from her body as though fastened therein with pegs or glue, like the cheapest sort of toy horses. Her enormous head dropped from the end of it like an overgrown gourd upon a broomstick. Only her bleary old eyes shot forth a vicious gleam that might have been mistaken for spirit—if you chanced to be near-sighted. She stood on her legs like a beer barrel on its trestles, and now and then looked anxiously around, as if searching for a fence to lean against. She looked as if she might be susceptible to glanders, botts, heaves, sulks, balks, and pretty much every other ill that horse flesh is heir to. In other words, she was about as perfect a specimen of crowbait that could be scared up in a day's ride.

"Jack said she wasn't much to look at, and, by Jingo! I think he was right," said the squire, scratching his head.

"She doesn't belie her name, anyway," said one of his friends, laughing.

"The squire has already bet a few hundreds on her, hasn't he?" said another.

"Yes, and he won't have much chance to hedge, either," cried a third.

"The critter might go for something to the button maker's," suggested the first speaker.

And then there was another laugh all around.

"What do you think of her, Sam?" said the squire, turning to his groom, who had, during all these pleasantries, been carefully examining Ramshackle.

"Well, sir," said Sam, with a knowing wink, but otherwise solemn aspect, "my opinion is that if Mr. Jack Malden can afford to trust in this mare, we can. She ain't a beauty, to be sure, but I've examined her close, and she's as sound as a dollar."

"Good!" cried the squire, brightening up at the recollection of his "nevvy Jack" having already passed critical judgment on the brute. "Hitch her to the tailboard, Sam. And, gentlemen, laugh as you please, I'm still ready to bet my pile, as well as my nevvy's pile, on this same Ramshackle."

It is not necessary to dwell upon the impression which the squire created among his fellow townsmen when he drove in with his new acquisition in lead, any more than to say that it was as deep as it was disappointing.

But Ramshackle was taken at once to Scudder's well-appointed stables, where she was put in thorough training, and under as careful and skillful grooming for the forthcoming sweepstakes as though she had been the sleekest and gamest racer upon whom anxious jockeys ever hung their hopes.

In the meantime Jack Malden had been duly apprised of the safe arrival of his treasure, and almost daily dispatches were received from him, reenforcing his injunctions of care, skill, and judgment to be lavished upon the mare, regardless of expense, inasmuch as he was making bets everywhere among his city sporting friends upon her success, and he expected to be upon the course just in time to see her dash in under the string in the lead of all competitors.

The squire's spirits also rose with the occasion, and he continued to make his bets in all directions.

It must be confessed that he had no difficulty in obtaining takers, and at great odds, for notwithstanding the general respect in which Malden's judgment was held by all the horse people in the country, Ramshackle's appearance was too much against her for any other consideration to surmount.

The fair had lasted a week, with splendid weather and a vast attendance, and at last the day of the races arrived.

The first was a three-quarter dash for three-year-olds, and after this came the great event of the day, the two-mile hurdle race, which had taken place annually for a number of years under the name of "Squire Scudder's Sweepstakes," the wealthy squire always furnishing the purse, beside providing at his own expense the additional accommodations incidental upon the event.

The stand was crowded with spectators of both sexes, and all ages and conditions. The green inside the track in the neighborhood of the judges' stand was also thronged with the usual groups of idlers, there was the customary hubbub of excitement pending the appearance of the horses upon the track, and the last hurdles were being placed in position.

The squire was perched alongside the judge in his box, conspicuous in his blue coat and brass buttons, and anxiously looking around for Jack, who at last made his appearance, looking tired and dusty from his railroad journey, but otherwise gay and eager as he made his way directly toward his uncle, who at once rushed down to meet him.

"How's Ramshackle?" was Jack's first query.

"Splendid!" was the reply. "That is, considering her style, you know."

"Style? Why, her style is superb!"

"Still not much for looks, as you yourself said in your dispatch, eh, Jack?"

"No, not much, compared with the finest racers I've seen," said Jack, looking puzzled; "but a magnificent, high-stepping mare for all that."

"I must be allowed to disagree with you for once, Jack," said the squire, a little stiffly.

"Where are the horses? Our race is on, isn't it?" said Jack, still bewildered.

"They've just brought them out," was the reply; and together they pushed down toward the entrance gates.

There were to be five starters for the sweepstakes, and all had just made their appearance upon the track, and were exercising briskly up and down before the stands. Four of them were fine animals, full of fire and motion, whose preliminary performances called forth general admiration.

The fifth was—Ramshackle; and, notwithstanding the decided improvement that had been effected in her style and appearance from the splendid grooming she had received, she was still such an utterly ungainly, preposterous-looking creature as to elicit corresponding outbursts of mirth and ridicule. Her jockey did his best with her, but she only ambled and sidled, and seesawed about the track, like a blind pony in a circus.

"Whose infernal old plug is that?" exclaimed Jack. "Why don't some one run him off the course? Where's the other starter?"

"The starters are all there—there's only five of 'em, Jack," said the squire, beginning to feel a cold chill creeping down his back.

"All there. Why, where's Ramshackle?"

"Why, Jack," faltered his uncle, "the—the plug yonder is Ramshackle."

Jack turned suddenly white, and looked as if about to faint. Then, recovering himself with an effort, he drew his uncle to one side.

"For Heaven's sake!" he whispered hoarsely, "don't tell me you've bet everything on that—that thing over there?"

"Yes, I have—everything I could borrow and scrape," was the groaning reply.

"We're tricked—ruined!" exclaimed Jack wildly. "I recognize the brute now; it's Whetstone, once a famous hurdle jumper, but long since gone to pot, and recently sold to Mr. Bullet's agent for a song."

In a few words Jack was put in possession of the incidents attending the spurious Ramshackle's arrival. He had been made the victim of an outrageous practical joke on the part of his "friend," Captain Quip, who had overseen the shipment of both animals from the city, and, by bribing the temporary grooms, effected the transposition, which the reader will now readily understand.

Uncle and nephew looked at each other in blank dismay. But just then there arose a great shout. During their excited conference the preliminaries had been arranged and the horses were off.

Sadly and silently they turned to the race, which was to furnish a wonderful disappointment for every one, but especially and joyously for those two.

Ramshackle, however deficient in running powers, could do one thing which not one of her rivals had ever been successfully taught to do—she could jump.

This was the one vestige of her departed glory, the secret of her strength; and the long and the short of it was that she won the race, among the most vociferous cheering and laughter, during which uncle and nephew could with difficulty refrain from falling into each other's arms and mingling their happy tears.

They were quickly themselves again, however, the squire to plume himself anew upon his fictitious horsemanship, and Jack to receive the admiring plaudits of his friends, and to

build a reputation upon a firmer basis than it had ever known before.

I may say, in conclusion, that Captain Quip was never called to account, and that an exchange was never demanded of the real for the sham Ramshackle, in consideration of the glory and profit she reaped for her owners at Squire Scudder's Sweepstakes.

END OF A SNAKE'S NURSERY.

The town of Bhangalpore, in India, lies in a low, moist valley. There the conservator of forests took up his residence when he was reporting on the state of some woods in Bengal. He found the bungalow in a very dilapidated condition. The "chut"—a whitewashed ceiling cloth stretched horizontally at the height of the walls, and hiding unseemly beams and rafters—was full of holes. So also was the thatch, as he knew from the patches of blue sky to be seen here and there. He says:

"I sent for the owner of the house, and ordered him to make the building thoroughly habitable.

"'Sir,' he replied, 'it is the dry season. You only want the house for a month or so, and during that time there will not be a drop of rain. What need is there for repairs?'

"He was plausible, but still I insisted on having the place put to rights. The next day when I reached the bungalow I found four or five thatchers and some servants loitering outside, but not a hand's turn of work had been done. Moreover, it was evident that they had not the slightest intention of beginning, for one of the thatchers approached me with joined hands, and said:

"'You may hang me if you like, sahib, but I cannot work at that house.'

"'Why, what is the matter with it?' I asked wonderingly.

"'Come and see!'

"Calling the other workmen, who had tied their hooked iron tools to the extremities of long bamboos, we approached the house, and then, standing by the doorways, began cautiously and apprehensively to pull down the chut, or ceiling cloth.

The sight that met our eyes absolutely beggared description. The whole roof, thatch, rafters, and beams, seemed literally alive with cobras. They swarmed in hundreds; hooded crests and angry heads hissed at us from every nook and corner. On examining the house further we found that the walls, made of sun-dried bricks, were completely honeycombed with holes and snake channels; and it was evident that the cobras had used the spot for years as a sort of nursery for bringing up their young. I am glad to add that, next day, the bungalow was burned to the ground."

THE CHEERFUL VIEW.

The family horse, which rejoiced in the eminently proper name of Dobbin, had earned a rest by long service, and was accordingly sent away to the country to spend his declining years in the broad pastures of a farmer friend of his owner. The distance being somewhat excessive for his rheumatic legs, adds a writer in the Montreal *Herald*, he was shipped to his new home by rail.

Edna, the family four-year-old, viewed the passing of Dobbin with unfeigned sorrow. She sat for a long time gazing disconsolately out of the window. At last, after a deep sigh, she turned with a more cheerful expression, and said:

"Did old Dobbin go in the cars, mamma?"

"Yes, dear," answered her mother.

A broad grin spread over the little girl's face. "I was just thinking," she said, "how funny he must look sitting up on the plush cushions."

A CLOSE CALL IN WAR.

THE commander of a blockade ship, the *Anderson*, off the coast of Texas, in 1862, went ashore upon what he supposed was the deserted island of Matagorda, on Christmas morning, intending to shoot one of the wild cattle known to be wandering about the island. His boat's crew wore their cutlasses, and there was half a dozen Sharp's rifles in the stern-sheets. They got over the bar by waiting for a heavy roller, and landed near the abandoned lighthouse.

Leaving the crew in the boat, the captain, with the doctor and the coxswain, clambered up into the tower of the lighthouse to get a view of their surroundings. The captain himself relates the adventure in his book, "Twenty Years at Sea."

He unslung his marine glass, looked at his steamer, and then turned his gaze inland. He did not take a very long look. Just over a sheltering sand hill, almost at their feet, was a Confederate camp! The tents indicated the presence of at least a hundred men, and before one of the tents were two brass fieldpieces.

For a moment the captain hoped that his party had not been noticed; but as he looked again he saw men stealing over the sand hills, toward his boat, which they doubtless meant to capture by surprise.

The captain acknowledges that for an instant he lost his wits, but the doctor's question: "Hadn't we better be getting out of this?" brought him to himself, and the trio made all haste to the ground.

The boat's crew, meanwhile, had set up a bottle for a mark and were shying stones at it.

"Into the boat, men!" the captain shouted, as he ran toward them. "They are almost on top of us!"

By this time the Confederates were pouring over the sand hills with exultant shouts. The boat flew, shots were fired, and then the doctor cried:

"They are bringing the fieldpiece over the hill, captain!"

"Give way, lads!" shouted the captain. "Make her jump, if you don't want to sleep in prison to-night!"

Shells began to fall. One man was wounded, but kept on pulling, and the boat seemed in a fair way to get out of range, when a new danger appeared. Men were launching a boat from the beach ahead, evidently designing to cut off the Federal boat before it could reach the bar.

Before the boat could be got afloat, however, there came the report of a heavy gun from outside, and the Yankees saw a rifle shell land in the sand very near their pursuers. Another followed, and exploded in the very midst of the men.

"Hurrah, doctor, the *Anderson* is talking back! There she is, God bless her!" and as the captain spoke, the "dear old barkey" hove in sight, "much closer to the bar than she had any business to be," the narrator says, evidently glad and proud of the fact.

The men pulled for their lives, the bar was got over by some means, it was hard to say how, and the captain and his men, though they had a lean Christmas dinner, did not spend the night in a Texas prison.

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Regularly every day Mr. Pierpont Morgan rises at eight, reaches the bank at eleven, and drives away at four-thirty. The door of his private office is always open, and from the public room of the bank every movement of the famous financier can be observed through the plate-glass windows. Hence it has been noted that he talks with his partner and secretary in short, sharp sentences—quite in the traditional style of the stage financier; while, further, it has been observed that most of the time he seems to be only "lounging about." And yet he controls five hundred million pounds.

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